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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 597. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 9TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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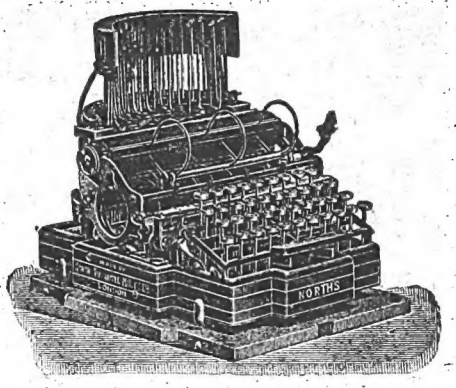

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SHORT STORIES

No. 597.

For the Week Ending
June 9th, 1900.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE BRIDE OF THE SWORD.

"IT all happened a great many years ago, in the days of the old 'John Company,'" said the Colonel, "and the story's been told on my verandah so often since I took command of the regiment that I'm really not half sorry, you know, to think that this is about the last time that I shall be called upon to tell it. Next month the Fusiliers will have a new colonel, and upon him will devolve the duty of telling to curious strangers the story of Tommy Threapwell's bequest to the regimental mess."

The "Bhowani plate," which adorned the mess-table of the 3rd Fusiliers, was a unique example of the silversmith's art. It always stood in the place of honour—in the centre of the board, where it instantly challenged attention by the massiveness of its design; but chiefly by the suggestiveness of the subject.

A man with the look of a European, but wearing the dress of a native, and bearing in his arms a lightly clad female form, was coming out of a clump of peepul trees which overhung a pool.

The girl was clinging to him tightly, and the artist had given to her beautifully modelled features an expression of mingled love, joy, and alarm.

Threapwell had commissioned the work from one of the first silversmiths in Madras. It had been the

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attraction of his own sideboard while he lived, and when he died—men made India their home in those days—he left it to his old regiment, with the proviso that the colonel should tell the tale to every subaltern on joining, and to any guest of the mess who professed a desire to hear it.

"India," proceeded the Colonel, helping himself to another 'peg,' "is a queer country to live in to-day, even for those who think they understand her; but in the days to which my story belongs it was still queerer. Under circumstances which will come out in the narrative, it was the custom among the Brahmins to marry their daughters to the Sword of Bhowani rather than have them left on their hands unmarried, after they had reached a marriageable age. The rites were as hideous as they were profane, and, after the ceremony, the maidens were dedicated to the service of the temple. With this preface you will easily follow the story."

* * * * *

"I have ill-news for thee, sahib," said Hurree Das, setting down the breakfast tray on the small round table. "Meeran has been here, and Kummoo is gone."

He drew himself up stiffly, and stood facing his master in the attitude of attention.

Captain Threapwell threw down his pen with an oath, and looked sharply at the man.

"Gone! Gone where?" he exclaimed.

The man turned up the whites of his eyes, spread out the palms of his hands, and muttered his inability to answer.

A ship was leaving for England that afternoon, and the Captain had risen early to finish his correspondence. His native servant had just brought him the tea and toast which is the Anglo-Indian's first breakfast.

"How long have you known this, Hurree?"

"The dawn was not in the sky, my lord, when the evil tidings came unto thy servant. She went in the night. They brought a palankeen, and took her while she slept. Meeran is the bringer of the news, sahib. The girl had travelled through the darkness without stopping by the way, for she was the bearer of this letter, which Kummoo sends to thee in all haste."

The man laid before Threapwell a tiny scrap of paper in which something had evidently been hurriedly screwed up.

The Englishman opened the paper deliberately, glanced hastily at the contents, and, withdrawing a clove, a peppercorn, a leaf of basil, and a withered marigold, spread them on the table in front of him.

Writing is not included in the list of accomplishments taught to their women by the husbands and fathers of India; but the woman has never lived who cannot be trusted to find a means of communicating with her lover under circumstances which would be the despair of the ordinary male intellect.

In India the inmates of the zenana have invented the "object letter." It answers every purpose for which writing could be employed, and frequently expresses the lady's meaning in a manner far plainer than most writing would.

Threapwell was no novice in the business. Kummoo's letter was more quickly deciphered by her feringhee lover than many an elaborate composition on scented paper.

She told him that she was in despair, that she had long loved him, that he must seek her quickly; that she was to be devoted to the goddess on whose altar the leaves of the sacred Toolsee were always sprinkled.

For several minutes Threapwell sat with his head in his hands, buried in thought. Suddenly he looked up. Hurree Das was still standing in deferential attitude a yard away.

"Is the girl here?" he inquired shortly.

"Meeran? No, sahib. She was afraid old Sukee would miss her. She returned while it was yet dark."

"Where have they taken her, Hurree? Where have they taken Kummoo, the sister of Motee Ram?"

"Meeran knoweth not, sahib," replied the man. "The girl was in sore distress because of her mistress, for Motee, she said, swore by the mother* that he would marry Kummoo to the Sword sooner than see her—a Brahmin girl, taken to wife by a cow-slaying infidel from over the black water—saving your presence, excellency."

Captain Threapwell threw down his pen and looked sharply at the man.

Threapwell bit his lip but said nothing. He was thinking out the situation. Kummoo, the beauty of Mundipore, for whose "dove's eyes" Tommy was willing to stake all and risk everything, was an orphan of good family. Her nearest relation was her brother, Motee Ram.

As a youth Motee had been wild and dissipated, and his character had not improved as he grew older. He was now in his twenty-fifth year, while Kummoo was just passing out of her sixteenth.

The girl's exquisite figure and peerless features had attracted many admirers amongst the crowd who thronged the steps or frequented the courts of the great Hindoo temple over

* The goddess, Kali.

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against the Sultan's palace on the Futteh Mydan, whither Kummoo was taken daily by her aunt to perform her devotions.

It was whispered cautiously by a few that Tippoo himself had seen her, and, smitten by her charms, had gone in disguise to the temple, and declared himself to the priest at the altar. Many, indeed, had been the offers made for Kummoo, but all had been refused. Gossip gave the credit to Motee. Nor was gossip far wrong.

Eager in the pursuit of pleasure, Motee was spending the mohurs left him by his venerable father at a rate which made his banker consult the young Brahmin's balance every time he fingered one of Motee's *hoondees.** Greedy, grasping, and avaricious, his sister's jewels were scarcely safe from her brother's covetous hands.

Kummoo herself was a valuable asset, and he intended her to fetch a good price. Pretty girls there might be, Motee knew several himself, but beauty such as Kummoo's only came into the marriage market at the rarest intervals, and he who wanted it must pay the figure. So the years had slipped by, and Kummoo was still unmarried at an age when it is considered a disgrace to a Brahmin girl to be unprovided with a husband. Then scandal had laid hands upon her name.

"Kummoo had an Ingleesh lover, a sahib of the 'Kompanee,' who——" But at this point the native imagination would run amok.

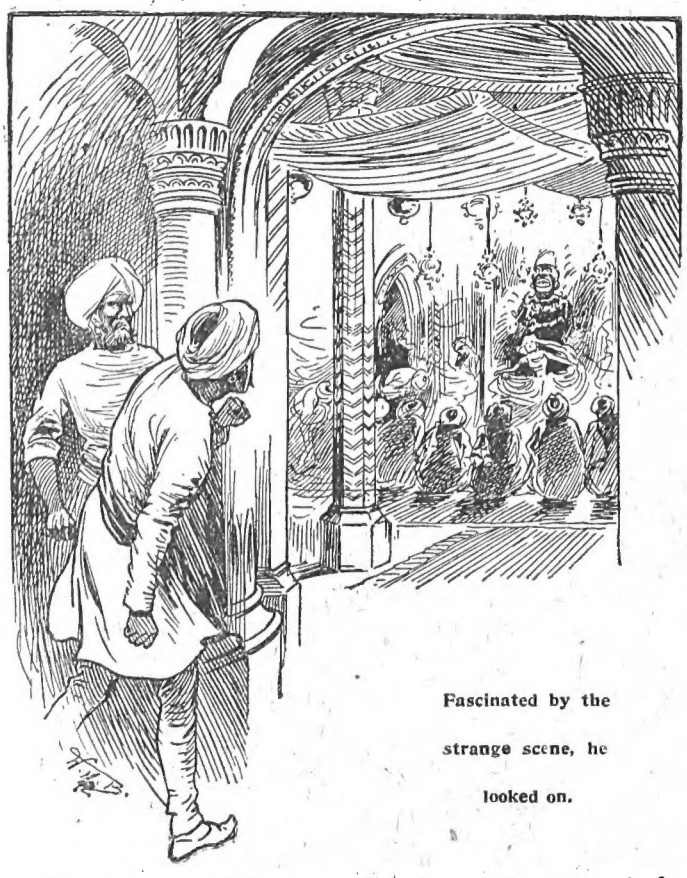
At last the ears of the chief Brahmin began to burn so hotly that Motee was sent for.

"Kummoo sixteen years old and unmarried!"

It was a scandal to the caste. If a husband were not found for her within three months it were better that she were married to the sword, and became a priestess of the goddess.

Motee had been thinking as much himself. It was the easiest way out of a difficulty that was beginning to trouble him. Tippoo was becoming importunate.

The whole business from start to finish flashed through Threapwell's mind while Hurree was pouring out his tea, and he swore a great oath that he would rescue the girl if he had to kill a sultan to do it. Taking from his pocket two gold mohurs, Tommy placed them on the table.



Fascinated by the strange scene, he looked on.

The eyes of Hurree Das glistened like diamond points.

"You know what they represent?" said Threapwell, glancing interrogatively at the bearer, and pointing with his finger at the coins. "Fifteen rupees each. Would you like to earn them? You can. You can earn two more from the same parcel if you bring me word within thirty-six hours where I can find Kummoo.

"I'm not asking you to take any risk, Hurree. Bring me word where she is, and you add sixty rupees to the hoard under the hearthstone. Is that good enough for you? I've heard the gossip in the bazaar, and I know what they're saying at the palace. She's in one of your vile temples where they'll work upon her with their devilry, and persuade her to accept service. That scamp of a brother of hers would sell her for a dancing girl without a pang to any sort of *pujaree* who'd fill his pockets for him.

"Good Heavens!" he muttered, bringing his fist down heavily upon his knee, "I'd rather see her lying dead at my feet than married to the Sword of Bhowani." Then, turning his eyes upon the man, "Go, Hurree," he said. "Go, and return quickly. Thy master hath a faithful servant in Hurree Das. Go, my friend, and remember the sixty rupees."

Tom Threapwell had lived long enough in India to know that native methods of obtaining information were inexplicable to Europeans, that greed of gain is an all-powerful motive in the native breast, and that between Hindoos and Mussulmans few things which a European really desires to know are absolutely unattainable provided that employer and employee have the confidence of each other.

Tom was not surprised, therefore, when Hurree presented himself, thirty-three hours later, and put in a claim to the money. Threapwell looked at the man curiously. Under the calm, impassive exterior of the Hindoo, Hurree was obviously in a state of intense excitement. The pupils of his eyes were dilated, his delicate nostrils twitched convulsively; you could see the muscles working like steel cords under his dusky skin.

What in the name of wonder could the man have discovered to affect him to such an extraordinary extent? In all his experience of the native character

* Drafts.

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Threapwell had never met the like before. He signed for Hurree to proceed, marvelling much what strange discl sure he was about to listen to.

"May thy splendour increase, excellency," said the man, making a low salaam. "Holy *Gopi*, but thy servant hath seen a strange thing, a thing which is not lawful for a man to behold."

Threapwell, thinking the man was probably referring to the ceremonies connected with the mystic marriage to the Sword, told him roughly that he needn't waste breath over that part of the business.

"Have you found Kummoo?" he cried. "Is she unharmed? Where have they got her hidden? I don't care a fig-leaf about all the rest. Come, speak, can't you? Is the girl safe? Let's have it at once, man, if you want to handle that sixty rupees."

Threapwell jumped up in his excitement, and began to walk about the room.

"The sahib shall be answered," stammered Hurree, whose face was working frightfully; "but I could wish that——"

"Out with it, man," roared Tommy, now quite beside himself. "Don't stand there gabbling about their vile pujaree business. Where is she?"

"His excellency shall be taken to the place this very night if he will trust himself with his servant," said Hurree, who was quaking with fear.

"You have seen her?" queried Threapwell, stopping in front of the man.

"I have seen her, excellency—her and another," he added in a whisper.

And Tommy, guessing who that other might probably be, felt that Hurree had ample reason for his display of agitation.

* * * * *

"Now thou art every whit as good a Brahmin, sahib, as Hurree Das. The symbol of Vishnoo upon thy forehead completes thy conversion. Thy things can be left here till we return."

"How far do you call it to the tamarind grove?"

"Two miles, sahib; but the ceremonies will not be over before midnight. It is the Festival of the New Moon, and the new *moorlee* will dance in the procession before Bhowani."

Threapwell ground his teeth.

"Then if all's ready let's be starting," he said curtly.

The man laid his finger on the hilt of a dagger which Threapwell concealed in his waistband.

"Excellency promised that no violence should be offered in the temple."

Tommy smiled grimly.

"Let be! Could I, think you, tear her from the grasp of a dozen priests with my single arm? Am I fool enough to try?" He didn't think it necessary to explain that, under circumstances easily conceivable, the weapon might find a home in the breast of a Sultan. "No, Hurree, we must contrive some way of opening communications—your pujarees have all an itching palm—and arrange to work the 'palankeen and blanket trick,' which, I believe, is the proper thing in these cases. The dagger is for myself in case of discovery."

They walked on for some time in silence. Threapwell was strangely excited. The temple they were bound for was situated in a secluded grove some distance off the track. There Hurree had assured Threapwell that he would see Kummoo in the garb of a moorlee, and—but it was punishable with death to whisper a word of it—likewise another, one who, of all persons in the dominions of the Sultan, ought not to be seen in the temple of a heathen goddess, Tippoo Sahib himself, the "Tiger of Mysore."

Threapwell walked on, thinking now of the man and now of the girl. Perhaps it was to-night that he was to receive her, the Bride of the Sword, from the hands of the pujaree.

"Never!"—he clenched his teeth—"if he and she and Tippoo also had to die for it."

Hurree, he knew, had managed in some way to let Kummoo know that her "letter" had been delivered; but the very name of Tippoo seemed to turn the man sick.

"Sahib," whispered Hurree in low tones, breaking in upon Tommy's reverie, "we have reached the grove. The temple is at the bottom. Your name, remember, is Kasee Lall."

Another minute and Threapwell stood within the porch. The image of the goddess was concealed for the moment by the clouds of incense that were rising from the altar. Presently, however, he could distinguish peering through the gloom two blood red points glowing like twin stars. They were the eyes of the idol—clusters of uncut rubies of enormous value. Then for a space the entire figure of the dread Bhowani was plainly visible, a black marble image with a hideous red mouth. Garlanded with flowers, hung round with lamps blazing with jewels, the idol was receiving the adoration of the worshippers.

Again the smoke went up as the officiating priest threw fresh incense on the altar, and the procession began to move round the temple.

Threapwell, breathlessly watching the

The keen eyes of the Hindoo had detected the flutter of garments.

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space in front of the idol, presently saw emerge from behind the low pedestal on which the figure was seated a form that could be no other than Kummoo's. Gliding with the graceful motion of a sylph into her appointed place she began to dance. The musical clash of her gold anklets, the tinkle of her bell-bangles, accompanied the step.

Threapwell had glanced round the building several times without seeing anyone who suggested Tippoo. But now, fascinated by the strange scene, he looked on while Kummoo was dancing like a man in a dream.

Not many minutes, however, could have passed ere he became aware that another watcher was observing her intently from a recess by the side of the altar, a man who, as the dance proceeded, was at no pains to conceal the strong personal interest he took in the dancer. The girl danced with all the *abandon* of the devotee, utterly unconscious of the admiration she excited or of the eyes which followed every movement of her lithe, supple limbs.

Threapwell set himself to scrutinise the man carefully. In a few moments he was satisfied. The "make-up" was perfect. Tippoo's colour and features, of course, lent themselves to the deception. To all appearance the man was a Brahmin of the Brahmins; but Threapwell, sure of his recognition and unable to restrain himself, hissed into the scandalised ear of Hurree Das the word which it had been death to utter in that place,

"Tippoo!"

The startled bearer never betrayed by look or sign what it cost him to suppress a groan.

Snatching the dagger from Threapwell's girdle, she plunged it into the breast of Tippoo.

"Yes, Mr. Motee Ram," said Tommy to himself, "I see now plain enough what was your idea in marrying Kummoo to the Sword. It's just the sort of infernal plot that would commend itself to your evil brain. So the chatter in the bazaar is truer after all than I conceived. Pah! how much now, I wonder, are you going to divide with that shaven-headed old villain with the red smudge on his forehead who's in charge of this devil's haunt? But you'll have to reckon with Tommy Threapwell before completing the bargain, my friend."

Throughout the rest of the night's ceremonies, Threapwell's brain was busy. He knew that not a moment was to be lost if he would save Kummoo from the common fate of the priestesses devoted to the service of the temple, and the fact that Tippoo himself was present in the guise of a Brahmin at the Hindoo festival of the new moon, augured badly both for the girl's prospects and the lover's chances. For well indeed the Captain knew that any man suspected of sharing the guilty secret would never be permitted to see the light of the morrow's morn.

The task of saving Kummoo from the hands of the pujarees would have been no easy one if Tippoo had not stepped in to complicate it. Now it appeared desperate; but, as Tommy watched the fairy form and lovely figure as it moved with easy grace through the voluptuous measure, he determined to accept the situation and trust to luck to bring him through.

The ceremonies concluded, Threapwell left the temple hurriedly. His immediate object was to keep Tippoo under observation. He wished to satisfy himself that the Sultan left the building alone. He determined, therefore, to secrete himself in the grove at a point which would command the entrance to the building.

The night was dark, but the temple was ablaze with lights. That attendants would be in waiting at a convenient spot Threapwell considered a mere matter of precaution.

Before he had gone a dozen paces off the track Hurree gripped him by the wrist. The keen eyes of the Hindoo had detected the flutter of garments.

"Palankeen men there, sahib!" he whispered in terrified tones; "six—eight. Palankeen back of the chumpa tree."

Then the foul work was to be done to-night, was it? That, of course, would explain Tippoo's presence at the temple. On the previous night he had gone there stealthily to gloat over the girl's beauty. Now, he had come like a thief to receive her, the Bride of Bhowani, from the hands of the priest. If the Captain would strike, he must strike at once. The crisis had taken him unawares, but he must not hesitate.

"It's either his life or mine!" he muttered as he loosened the dagger in his girdle. "Hist! What's that?" he inquired, suddenly assuming a listening attitude. "Hark!"

His ear had caught the slow trickle of water.

"The holy well, sahib, the well in which the pilgrims bathe at the Festival of the Holy Mother."

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A wild thought sped like a flash through Tommy's brain as he inquired:

"Where is it?"

"In the ravine below, sahib. These giant peepuls hide it from view; they overhang it. The path leading to it is at the back of the temple."

"It sounds just under my feet."

"The sahib is standing just above it," answered Hurree, puzzled to account for his master's manner. "The trees prevent him from seeing it."

"Is it a clean jump?"

"Protection of Heaven!" exclaimed the man. "Is the sahib mad? *Sho-rk!* See there!"

Threapwell looked in the direction indicated, and saw a figure which he recognised at once as that of Tippoo emerging from under the porch of the temple. In his arms he clasped a form which, half-smothered beneath a blanket, uttered no cry and made no struggle.

A Hindoo girl, married to the Sword, Kummoo had passively resigned herself to her fate, yet every faculty was alive and alert. Not till she found herself in the Sultan's zenana would she cease to believe that her English lover would find a means to carry her off under the very eyes of the "Tiger" himself.

"Now, Hurree," said Threapwell, "scatter. I should be sorry if harm came to you. You can go no further along this road. Get back to my quarters, and if I don't turn up in twenty-four hours take the letter you'll find on my desk to the Colonel. Now, look to yourself, man—run, run!" And slipping through the tamarind trees, Threapwell, with his hand on his dagger hilt, waited impatiently the coming of Tippoo.

He allowed the Sultan to pass, then, drawing his blade, slipped out on the path and raised his arm. But at this moment his English training asserted itself—the natural instincts of the Englishman would not permit him to use the coward's blow—and, replacing the dagger in his girdle, he seized Tippoo firmly by the shoulder and called him by his name.

The sudden action, the fearless utterance, the dread character of the tamarind grove, the superstitious nature of the man, and the guilty knowledge he possessed, caused Tippoo to stagger like a stricken deer. He dropped the burden he was carrying, and fumbled in his waistband for his dagger.

The next moment, with Kummoo in his arms, he had taken the leap.

Kummoo, who had thrown off the blanket, on hearing the voice of Threapwell, started to her feet. With the swiftness of feminine intuition, she grasped the situation in an instant. Snatching the dagger from Threapwell's girdle, she plunged it into the breast of Tippoo before he had time to recover from his amaze, and whispering, "The well, my lord, the well below the peepuls," she pushed her lover towards the trees.

"The very thing, my pigeon, I'd decided on," murmured Threapwell, pressing a kiss upon her lips.

The next moment, with Kummoo in his arms, he had taken the leap. It was a thirty foot jump, and there was no time to "negotiate" it. But at certain crises in men's lives the man who hesitates is lost.

"She was light as a feather," said Tommy in telling the tale, "and clung to me like a leech."

Tippoo Sultan, who never doubted that Bhowani had worked a miracle on behalf of her morlee, was confined to his palace by "indisposition" for a fortnight from the date of the new moon, but he carried a mark on his breast ever after.

The piece of plate which now adorns the mess-table of the 3rd Madras Fusiliers, was commissioned by Major Threapwell to commemorate the rescue of the girl who became his wife from the "claws" of the Tiger of Mysore, and, long after Tippoo's capital had fallen before General Harris, an English sahib, whose white villa was hidden amongst the tulip trees behind Madras, would tell the story of Kummoo, the Bride of the Sword.

H. Hunter.

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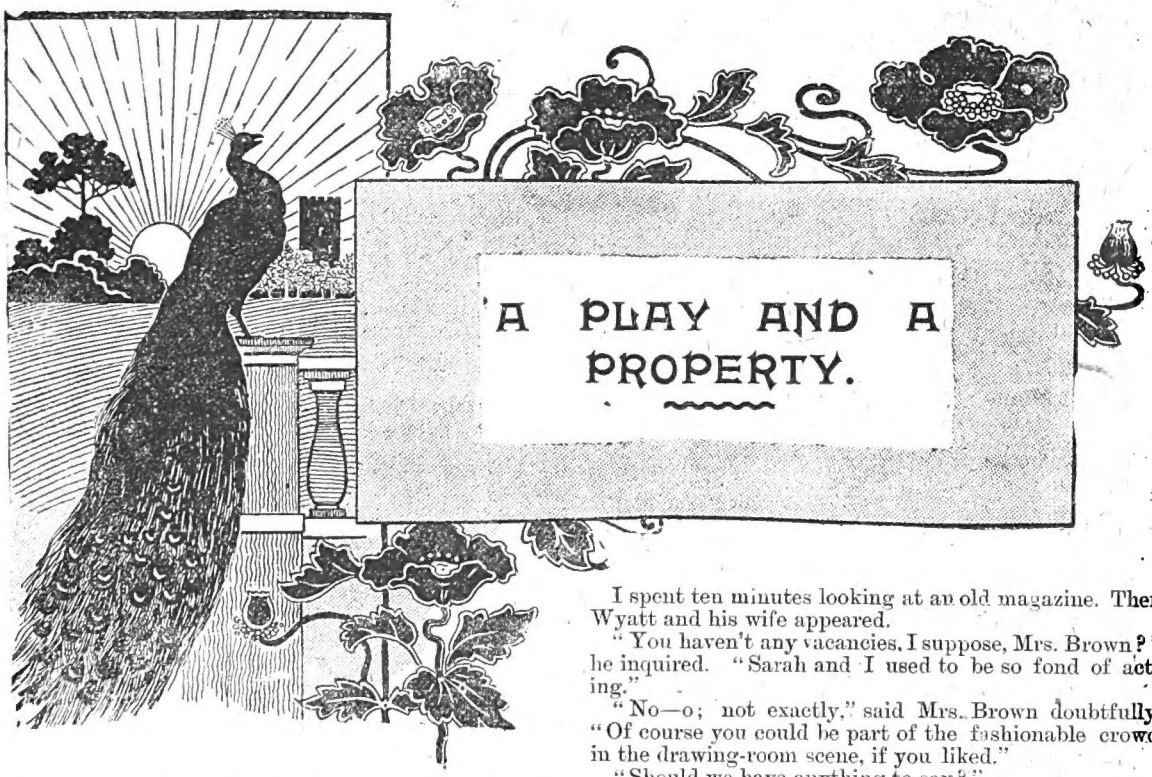

A PLAY AND A PROPERTY.

I HESITATED about going to the Browns' theatricals, when we received the invitation: but as soon as I heard that Mrs. Brown had written the play herself my hesitation vanished.

"We shall be engaged," I pronounced firmly.

My wife said afterwards that she understood me to mean "engaged" to go there. I do not believe she understood anything of the sort; but as she had a new dress she was bound to wear it somewhere. So I accepted the inevitable.

When we arrived the hall was full of hats and coats, and I could hear at least a dozen ladies talking in the breakfast room; but we were shown into an empty drawing-room—the theatre.

"You see," Mrs. Brown explained, "the difficulty is to get an audience."

"I should think so," I agreed. Then I caught my wife's warning eye. "At least, I mean—er——"

"Everybody wants to act, you see. So I have put in as many parts as possible, if they only have a few lines apiece." My wife looked at me appealingly.

"Very kind of you," I murmured. "If you have a few lines left for Mrs. Oliver——"

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Brown uneasily. "You see, it's rather late. If you had told me before——"

"It doesn't matter," said my wife with an air of sad resignation, "though I have always longed to act"

"Then," said Mrs. Brown, "you shall. I will introduce another character. Let me see. 'You might bring in a letter—or——"

"That would do nicely. I could 'make up' as a servant, you know, with a nice cap."

"It would just suit you. Come into the green room, and we will arrange it."

So I was left alone in my glory.

I spent ten minutes looking at an old magazine. Then Wyatt and his wife appeared.

"You haven't any vacancies, I suppose, Mrs. Brown?" he inquired. "Sarah and I used to be so fond of acting."

"No—o; not exactly," said Mrs. Brown doubtfully. "Of course you could be part of the fashionable crowd in the drawing-room scene, if you liked."

"Should we have anything to say?"

"Well—er—you can make a few remarks, you know, about anything that occurred to you."

"The weather, Sarah," he suggested, in a stage whisper.

"The weather, John," she agreed. "I could 'make up' in some of Mrs. Brown's things, and powder my hair."

"And I could borrow some clothes from Brown. I suppose he wouldn't mind, would he?"

"He'll be delighted," Mrs. Brown averred, "if he hasn't lent them all to the others."

"If he has," said Wyatt cheerfully, "I'll borrow some of theirs."

So they also departed to the green room.

Tankerton was the next to arrive.

"You and Mr. Oliver will be nice company for one another till we are ready," said Mrs. Brown, persuasively; but he pleaded so hard for a part that she agreed to his being anything that did not interfere with the action of the play.

"I'll just run home and borrow my brother's volunteer uniform," he observed gleefully, "to make up in," and off he ran.

Then Kate Nugent came in.

Kate is a jolly girl, and I thought that she and I would make a capital audience. Unfortunately, she also desired to perform, and extracted Mrs. Brown's consent to go and borrow a cousin's friend's sister's uniform to "make up" as a hospital nurse.

After another ten minutes young Sharp and his sister were shown in. They were so hurt at having been left out of the performance that the authoress promptly added a part for each.

Sharp was to be a masher and have my silk hat, and my stick to suck; and his sister was to wear grand-

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mother Brown's cap and spectacles and take my ticket to the door. An old 'bus ticket, I was informed confidentially, would do.

Finally. old Morse appeared. To my horror he seemed quite content to stop with me.

"We can have a nice little chat," he said.

He is the biggest bore within five miles.

"You don't mean to tell me that you are not taking a part," I exclaimed. "If I had suspected that, I don't think I should have come." If I had suspected that, he would be left alone with me, I am sure I shouldn't! "Why, with your powers of elocution!"

"It is rather a pity," he assented thoughtfully. "Perhaps, if you were to suggest it?"

Our hostess came smilingly to greet him, and I suggested it accordingly.

The poor woman looked at me reproachfully. I really felt sorry for her; but self-preservation is the first law of nature. So I persisted that it would be a thousand pities if some use were not made of his talents.

"If you had only heard him tell that tale about his little dog!" I said. "I shall never forget it!"

"I don't see how I can bring in the little dog," she objected. "There isn't a speaking part left; but there's the moon—in the first scene, you know."

"The moon?"

"It's a Chinese lantern, really."

"I can't be a Chinese lantern," he protested in a hurt voice.

"No," she admitted, "but it has to rise, of course. You could pull the string over the door!" He looked dissatisfied. Some people are never contented.

"Won't there be anything after the first scene?"

"There wasn't," she confessed. "But there are several other scenes in which the moon could rise again."

So the moon artist was led to the green room; and I was once more alone in the stalls.

The curtain was a long time rising; to be exact, there was no curtain that I could see to rise. At last I ventured to knock at the dining room door and remonstrate.

"All right, old chap," said Brown. "They're just whitewashing my hair and moustache. I'm an old general, you know."

"Mind you don't grow too old, before it begins," I growled.

"We shan't be half a minute," he answered, "before we come and set up the scenery."

After another quarter of an hour Brown and three other fellows appeared. Brown's hair was whitewashed so effectively that it stood straight on end, and his moustache looked like a plaster model. He wore home-made military trousers, several sizes too large, and his coat was a reconstruction out of some of his wife's old blouses. His cocked hat had been a table-cover, except the cockade of coloured tape. Altogether he looked like one of the stuffed effigies that little boys burn upon the 5th of November! His companions were similarly attired.

"Perhaps I ought to go out while you set up the scenery?" I suggested. I was afraid that I could not contain my emotions if I looked at the actors for long.

"Thanks, old man," said Brown cordially, "I didn't like to suggest it, but if you really don't mind——"

"Not at all. Where shall I go?"

"Well, there's only the kitchen left. All the other rooms are taken up for dressing. You see, there are about twenty-five characters in it."

"Don't mention it," I said cheerfully.

They have a very pretty parlourmaid at Brown's. She was engaged in tying greenstuff on a huge clothes horse in the kitchen.

"Why, Florrie!" I said, "whatever is this?"

"This, Mr Oliver," she said with a titter, "is the shrubbery!"

I sat down on the table and roared. If you had seen the shrubbery!

"The heroine stands in it," she explained, "like this. Then the gentleman comes in—there's just room for two—and catches hold of her, and—Oh, Mr. Oliver!"

"Aren't you in the play, Florrie?" She tossed her head.

"Not me! All my best aprons and caps are. There's four or five of them going to be servants in turns. I wish they'd come and take a turn out here!"

"Have you any more scenery?" I enquired.

"Not unless you call them scenery." She looked up with a piece of string between her teeth, and nodded at a bottle, water jug and glasses upon a tray.

"Is there a drinking scene?"

"There's a crusty old lord," she stated, "in the second scene. His wife gives him some whisky, and he complains that it's poisoned, or bad or something."

"Is it bad?"

"Bad! Why the lord is uncle Tomkins, what she has expectations from!"

"Umph," I said thoughtfully. "It would make the acting better if—" Florrie looked at me mischievously.

"There's a bottle of quinine wine in the cupboard, in a bottle just like that," she remarked casually. "Plenty of quinine and not much wine. She made it. It's nearly the same colour."

"Ah!" said I.

Florrie picked up the shrubbery and departed, with a saucy, backward glance. In five seconds I had found the quinine wine, and in another five I had changed the bottles. It might help on the action, I considered.

Then I was summoned to the "royal box"—otherwise the bay window. The curtains were pinned across the front, leaving me in semi-darkness, until a bell had rung five or six times. Then they were drawn up—I mean unpinned.

The drama opened with the shrubbery scene. Maggie Bell came tripping in the door and disappeared inside the shrubbery. The clothes horse was very tall, and Maggie is very short.

"I say," I objected. "I can't see anything but the ornament on the top of her hair." So they gave her a footstool to stand on.

Then the hero came in, looking very nervous.

"Ah!" said he severely.

Then he stopped.

"How this scene reminds me," prompted Mrs. Brown, from behind a big screen.

"Screen—scene—er—reminds me," he repeated, feebly.

"Of her—*Go on!*"

"Of her—her—whose—er—lovely blue eyes were once the sun of my night."

"Star of my night," corrected the talented authoress. "Do collect yourself, Fred!"

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So Fred collected himself, and gave out a large amount of eloquence in a very shamefaced manner. Presently he fixed his eyes upon the door.

"Ah! What do I see? The orb whose pale refulgence——"

"Wait, wait!" cried Mrs. Brown. "They haven't lit the candle."

So he waited, while Morse came in and illuminated the moon. Then he went out and began to pull it up by the string over the door.

The moon rose as if it had "made up" as a shooting star. Near the zenith it tilted and became a blazing comet.

There was a wild scream, and a horde of generals and admirals rushed in and eclipsed it with a hearthrug and door mat.

When the excitement had subsided, I was asked to imagine the moon. I consented, and the hero made his way behind the clothes-horse.

"Ah, false girl!" he exclaimed with surprise.

"Oh, Fred—I mean Claude!" said the heroine with a giggle.

"At last do I see thy face."

"Why dost thou, Fred, you're standing on my foot. Why dost thou call me false, when—Fred! You're on the other."

"All right!"

"It isn't all right. You are a great bear."

"Go on," said Mrs. Brown impatiently.

"Why dost thou—do be quiet!—call me false, when—Don't be so absurd!" There was a shuffle, Maggie's head disappeared suddenly; and the shrubbery overturned.

Mrs. Brown rushed forth, read the riot act, and put the shrubbery out in the passage.

"You shall act without any scenery," she said sternly. "Mr. Oliver, you will imagine the shrubbery, please."

"Certainly," I assented.

They acted accordingly. At least I suppose it was acting. The stage kisses sounded very real. So did the box on the ears which Maggie—I mean Estelle de Vere—gave him. But that I believe was not in the play.

Then I was pinned up again. The waiting however was not so long this time. Indeed it seemed singularly short. This may have been because Kate Nugent, by some accident, was pinned up with me.

In the second scene, Aunt Susan—I mean Lady de Montmorency-Talbot—was discovered, seated at a writing table. Three servants brought in letters. There was evidently a postal delivery every thirty seconds at the castle. They each offered a few remarks, and were ordered out.

Then one of them announced Lord de Montmorency-Talbot. As it was his own castle, I don't quite know why they announced him; but possibly he liked it made quite clear that he was a lord.

He was a very old and crusty gentleman; and Uncle Tompkins seemed to feel quite at home in the part. He has a very red face, a very short temper, and a voice like bottled thunder, at his best; and someone had stamped on his pet corn just before he came in. He proposed to disinherit Claude, and a few trifles of that sort. He stormed at his wife and stamped round the stage. He dismissed every servant who appeared. Incidentally he knocked over a what-not full of china, and remarked that it should not have been put in such an absurd place; but I scarcely think that was in the "book." Once he actually said a bad word. Her ladyship evidently thought it necessary to soothe him, so she rang for a servant, and commanded some whisky to be brought.

"What is this abomination, woman?" his lordship demanded fiercely.

"Whisky, my love," said her ladyship soothingly. "Do take a little. It will do you good." Then she informed me in an aside that she "must dissemble, and hide her breaking heart."

"Ur-r-r!" growled the wicked lord. "Do me good—ur-r-r. You'd rather it poisoned me." He helped himself to half a glassful, with a dash of water. Uncle Tompkins always likes to taste what he is drinking, he says. He proceeded to taste.

From this point his acting was simply grand. He dropped the glass with a crash, bounded from his chair and gave a wild yell.

"Ur-r-r-roo!" he shouted. "Confound you! Ur-r-r! What the—! Ur-r-r!" He danced round the room like a wild animal.

"Splendid!" said Mrs. Brown enthusiastically.

"Magnificent!" cried Brown, looking through the door.

"Superb!" shouted a dozen voices from the passage.

"Encore!" I yelled, clapping my hands.

He shook his fist at us all round in turn.

"If you think you'll make a fool of me, madam," he thundered, "I'll teach you better. I'll go home and alter my will this moment, as sure as my name is Tomkins!"

"De Montmorency-Talbot," corrected Mrs. Brown softly. "How grand he is!"

"De Montmorency-Talbot be ——," he shrieked.

He rushed from the door like a whirlwind. From the noise outside I gathered that he had upset the hall stand, getting his overcoat and hat. There was a slam of the front door. I heard him growling like a lion as he stamped down the front path. Then Brown rushed in with his whitewashed hair appropriately standing on end.

"Clara!" he gasped. "The whisky—He's gone!"

* * * * *

"So annoying," said my wife, as we walked home, "to stop the play like that. Why, I had only been on once."

"How did it happen?" I inquired. "Who was to blame?"

"Mrs. Brown herself," said my wife, "of course. She took the wrong bottle out of the cupboard. He'll cut her out of his will to a certainty."

"Yes," I said; "but he'll put her in again."

He did; upon condition that she burnt the play.

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Helen of San Antonio.

"THERE's going to be trouble over this," said Jule Lamar, swinging himself into his high-peaked embossed saddle and thoughtfully stroking the coil of *riata* that hung from the horn.

I was riding with him.

"About what?" I asked.

He turned on me rather savagely and touched his mustang with the great spurs, checking its forward plunge with the cruel mameluke bit.

"I'll tell you, being a friend," he said. "Maybe you've heard me speak of Lola Villarez, maybe not."

A flush overspread his sunburnt face, shaded by the broad hat-brim from the glare of the Texan sun that shone down fiercely on San Antonio, cracking the paint on every shanty and posada outside which sundry "gentlemen" loafed, basking like alligators in the frantic heat, chewing or smoking.

Now and then a "prairie schooner" with its huge white tilt and sleepy oxen stirred up the abundant dust, or a dashing vaquero in all the glory of fringe and chains and costly gold-trimmed sombrero cantered along on his fiery little steed. On the shaded side-walks a motley but scant collection of humanity strolled and jostled; hunters, trappers, rangers, Chinamen, negroes, señoritas, cow-punchers from the plains and vaqueros from the Rio Grande, New Mexico and Chihuahua. There were sailors and soldiers, rich and poor, murderers and curés; and Jule Lamar and myself.

I had heard of the lady in question, and from others besides my friend Jule.

Her mother, a Mexican of Taos, kept the Posada Americana, her father was dead—and that, as far as I know, was all that anyone knew of him.

Lola herself was certainly a beauty, the acknowledged belle of San Antonio, tall, dark and brilliant, and Jule had fallen head over heels in love with her "on sight."

He had believed that she returned his affection, and perhaps the idea of one day becoming the "boss" of the fine saloon had something to do with his infatuation, for never had gladiator greater desire to end his days as a wine-shop keeper in Rome than this Texan cow-puncher to be the emperor of his own saloon.

Lately however, Garcia Torré had seen fit to take upon himself the office of cavalier to the lady and to make an attack upon the virgin heart of this Mexican enchantress; "which," said Jule sadly, "is going to turn the place upside down."

I reminded him that a girl was perfectly free to select her knight, but the tall ranchman shook his head.

"She promised me," he said, firmly; "and by all her unmentionable greaser saints she must stick to her word. This half-breed Injun fellow will have to vamose, or there'll be a fuss. You hear me?"

I furtively surveyed the man and thought that he would be no mean antagonist for the stranger who had crossed his path, notwithstanding the fact that the man Torré was a notoriously "bad" specimen—an Indian-fighter known to be a murderer, and no place but San Antonio could hold him.

It seemed strange that Lola could have fancied the companionship of a man who was known to have strangled a squaw and two babies with his naked hands, not to, mention numerous other more or less true reports of horrible deeds.

Of course such things as "getting the dead-wood" on "Colt" Hankey over a dispute of a bet at Poker, and dismissing that worthy from earth in a hurry, and knifing a "Chinee" for smiling at him when inebriated, were not counted, but apart from that the "hard cases" even looked askance on him.

Jule resented bitterly the fact of the girl he was really earnestly in love with being seen in the company of such a noted dirty desperado, and avowed to me his intention of clearing up affairs.

Next day we rode together to the Posada Americana Jule wishing the moral support of a friend, and I to see "fair play," in the interest of one who was a true companion, for Torré had on one occasion strangled an unconscious enemy in a duel with his own neck-cloth, and, hitching our animals, strode into the bar.

"I want to speak to you, Lola," said Jule, quietly with a set smile on his grim face; "come out on to the verandah."

With our respective potations we repaired thither. In a moment Lola joined us, and I had leisure to inspect this perturber of the souls of men.

It was no exaggeration to say she was a beauty, and as far as mere personal loveliness went I admired her, with the intense admiration I should extend to a splendid statue or painting.

But love, no! Her skin was fair, and tinted like a rose-leaf, and indigo tresses clustered over her head in luxurious heaps, contrasting vividly with the whiteness of her brow.

But to me, an admirer of her sex, there was something dangerous in the full, pouting lips and the languid eyes, the beauty seen in eastern odalisks.

I could, however, understand Jule's passion for her, and knew that no arguments could point out to him the serpent in the angel's guise.

I discreetly arose and retired a little, but I overheard the first words, spoken by the ranchman.

"Lola," he said, with a quiver in his voice, "you know I love you, don't you, and you have promised——"

I got out of earshot, but from a distance I saw them talking very earnestly, Jule pleadingly, the girl haughtily. Smoking my cigar I pondered on the future, my reverie being broken by the entrance, with a bottle of whisky, of no less a personage than Garcia Torré.

With belled spurs tinkling on his high-heeled boots he advanced, and on perceiving the pair *tête-à-tête* stopped suddenly with a villainous Spanish oath. His right hand, habitually free for action, dropped on his revolver-butt, and Jule, thrusting Lola aside, confronted him with similar menace.

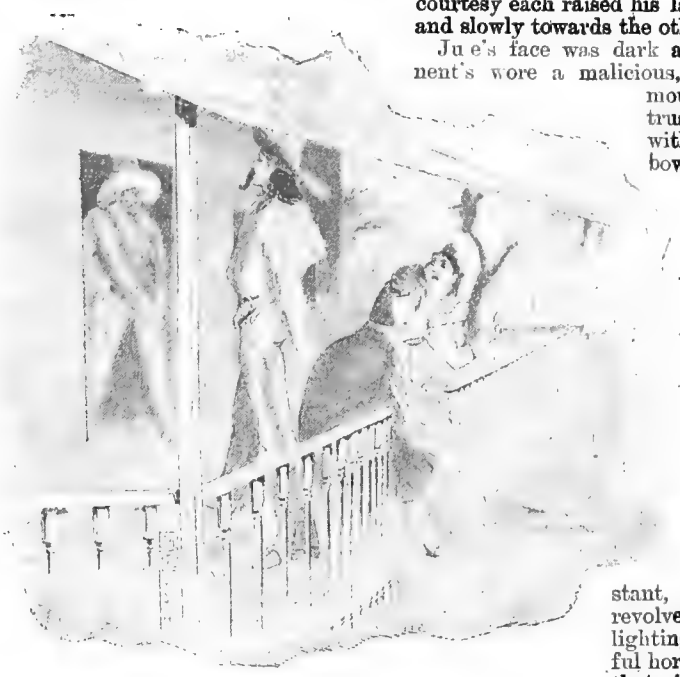
"A palaver Torré," he said, "drop your gun!"

The ruffian gingerly moved his hand and agreed to a talk, and I strolled up with all the supply of moral support I possessed, backed by a "forty-five" revolver, and a large bowie.

"Who's your pard?" asked Torré, suspiciously.

"Oh, he's only a Britisher," said Jule, as though such a being were scarcely worth reckoning here or there; but under the circumstances I controlled myself from making reply and endeavoured to look as dangerous as I could. Jules face was set and stern.

"It's this way," he said, "I figured to have got the inside track on the girl's notions, but she seems to have two minds on the point. Now, there's only one thing to be done, the town won't hold the three of us. Either you vamose or we fight for it. Which!"



Jule, thrusting Lola aside, confronted him.

Lola began to sob in terror.

The ruffian turned on her with an expression that brought Jule's revolver from its sheath in an instant.

"If you speak to her again, you die in your tracks!" he thundered. "Answer my question! Which?"

"I'll fight," said Garcia, sullenly, brief under the threat of the revolver.

"Good. Let it be with rope, gun, and knife, by the Alamo monastery to-morrow at sun-up. Till after then we will both leave the girl alone."

They went out, leaving Lola weeping in the shady hut but when she saw that they had gone, she dried her tears and resumed her ordinary composure, and before I followed them a slight, scornful smile curled her lip.

Garcia had gone, and Jule and I rode off in silence without a backward glance.

I thought of the morrow's meeting with gloom in my heart, knowing the issue of these wild duels but too well.

Garcia would bring four "pards," myself and three others from the ranch would support Jule, and the probabilities were that there would be a free fight.

The fateful hour arrived and I hope I may never see again such a quartette of unhung ruffians as appeared that morning with their principal.

"Vulture's meat, every mother's son of a gun," laughed Pinto Jim, recklessly, and we all agreed with him. But for the inviolable honour of the *duello* I am sure we should have been more than justified in "plugging" the lot and the world would have been the better for their loss.

The two principals advanced and with a certain rough courtesy each raised his large sombrero, solemnly and slowly towards the other.

Jule's face was dark and stern, but his opponent's wore a malicious, evil grin; both were mounted on tried and trusted steeds and armed with *riata*, revolver and bowie, and the issue appeared to hang on an accident so evenly matched did they appear.

Turning their backs on one another they rode apart for twenty yards or so, and at the sharp sound of a pistol-shot turned and faced. At a slow canter each circled, winding the deadly *riata*, the two supple figures ready to dodge in an instant, the flashing spurs, the revolver-butt, chains and bits lighting up the picture of graceful horsemanship. And all for that girl who was perhaps even now flying with some third cavalier.

Almost like a sleight-of-hand trick Garcia swung down his rope to his left hand, and from his right leaped the flashing spurt of smoke from his revolver. I saw Jule's sombrero move and the brim buckle up, but almost before that had happened his noose shot out like arrowy lightning over his opponents head.

The man dropped, and it was all so quick that it seemed but one movement, yet the *riata* spun his hat from his head and nearly ripped off an ear as the closed noose leaped back harmlessly into the air.

Instantly a revolver bullet struck the horn of his saddle, sending the splinters flying, and one seemed to have struck him in the face, for the blood rushed down from a gash below the eye.

Half-stunned, he rose up, and now the mustangs flew in wide circles; Jule's rope was coiled and ready again and both long loops were winding against the blue sky in deadly rings.

The ranchman suddenly swooped down like a hawk on his opponent, but he was too impetuous and swept

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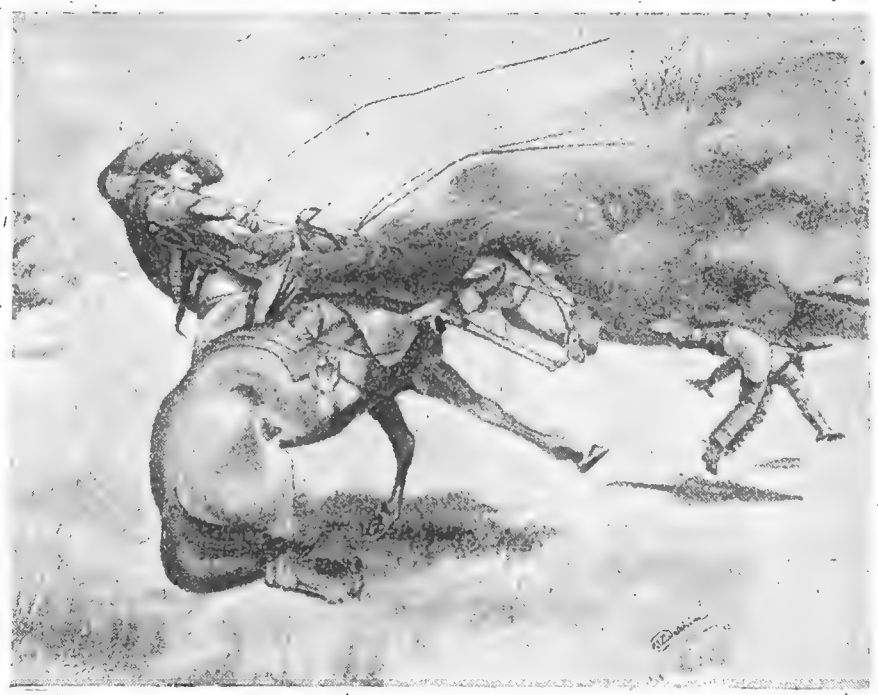
past the wheeling charger of Garcia, who dropped his rope right over him, as he bent over the horse's flank.

His own loop leaped into the air and encircled his man and both formidable bowies flashed forth together as he swung himself upright, and wheeling his fine steed on its hind legs, leapt it at his opponent.

The only way for Garcia to meet this violent attack was with his own steed, and as he pulled forth his long-barrelled revolver he wrenched the charger up to meet the battering hoofs of the other.

Flash! Flash! Crack, crack, crack! A medley of horses, men, flying ends and loops and tossing hair. Jule's brave steed thrust down the other, having the first advantage, but a bullet had ploughed its flesh from shoulder-point to saddle, and blood was flying in thick gouts. It dropped, too, from the rider's armed heel; but what was that to the triumph of the thrilling moment when the huge spurs sent the animal over the crouching steed before him, and horse and man rolled headlong on the plain!



He was hurled with frightful violence to the earth.

The man rose with a bound, raised his revolver, and as the hammer fell harmlessly, hurled it at Jule. It caught the ranchman fair on the forehead and he staggered with a cry as Garcia turned and leaped towards a clump of timber not far off.

For a moment I thought to see my friend drop, and felt thankful that his opponent had not followed up the attack with the bowie, for he could easily have wrenched Jule from the saddle and have made an end of him. But the half-stunned man recovered himself and headed his steed for the fugitive, mechanically recovering his *riata* and coiling it.

With the movement, a sudden fury seemed to animate him, for he sat straight up and twirled the wide noose for a deadly cast.

Garcia was within reach of the timber when beneath him fell the whirling circle. His feet were entangled, the noose closed over one, and as the mustang halted with a jerk the secured rope tightened and he was hurled with frightful violence to the earth as Jule staggered and fell from the saddle.

The mustang, perfectly trained and intelligent, wheeled and kept the rope stretched, and slowly we all moved towards the group.

"D'ye reckon your man's satisfied?" said Buck Lawson of "ours" to the roughs.

One of them rudely hauled the recumbent figure up, and as he did so a stream of blood rushed from his lips. His eyes were upturned and glassy and the man let him fall heavily to the ground with a dreadful laugh.

"Guess so. 'Morning, gentlemen."

The beautiful quartette moved off and we raised our comrade. He had a bullet wound and a knife-slash in the thigh and as we pulled off his hat a quantity of blood fell like a torrent from a wound where the first bullet, turned by the stiff brim, had ploughed a furrow in his scalp.

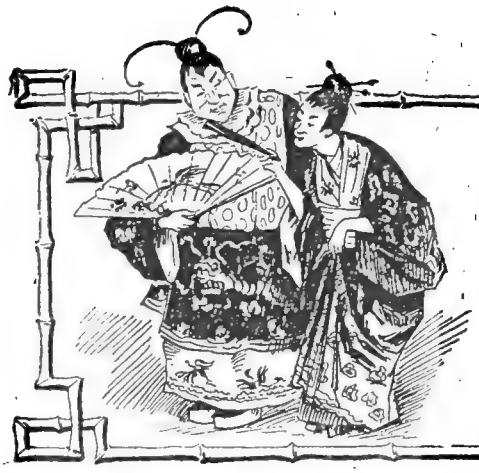
The revolver hurled at him had gashed his forehead and caused a deep bruise, but all his hurts were slight, comparatively.

Garcia was dead. Besides the wound in his face he had received a shot in the chest just above the heart and could scarcely have lived anyhow. But of course the violence with which he had been hurled to the earth settled any doubts on that score.

Jule's first words were respecting the cause of the trouble—Lola Villarez. He was soon able to move about, and insisted, despite his wounded thigh, on going to the Posada Americana.

The boys warned him that he would cause no end of complications by his rashness, but he relieved them of all anxieties on that score by a revolver bullet through the head administered by himself beside the dishevelled bed where the girl lay dead with Garcia Torré's bowie through her heart.

D. B. METCHIM.



Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

IX.—HE TRIES TO SOLVE THE SERVANT GIRL PROBLEM.

"AND now what's happened?" demanded Mr. Bowser as he came home the other evening and found Mrs. Bowser setting the table for dinner.

"Nothing, except that the cook got cranky and left me at noon," she replied.

"You—you mean you sent her off without a moment's warning," he continued.

"I mean nothing of the kind. She found fault with the range, the kitchen, the washing and everything else, and finally said she'd go."

Mr. Bowser sulked and growled while eating the dinner, though it was a better one than usual, and it was not until Mrs. Bowser had cleared the table and was ready to sit down for the evening that he touched upon the subject again by saying:

"I want to talk to you a little, and I hope you will be able to keep your temper while I do so. You have had fifty different cooks in the last year, and the fact that none of them have remained with you over ten days shows that there is something radically wrong somewhere."

"I have had only five cooks during the last year," corrected Mrs. Bowser. "There's the book with their names written down."

"I said fifty, and I know I'm right!" said Mr. Bowser with emphasis. "Fifty different cooks, and your treatment of them was so outrageous that not one of them could put up with it."

"Only five, and one got ill, one had to go home on account of death in the family, and two of the others refused to stay on your account."

"Refused to stay on my account. Woman, explain yourself!"

"They said you were too fussy and cranky!"

"Never!" shouted Mr. Bowser as his face grew red in a minute. "No girl ever said those words. In order to make excuses for your heinous conduct, you are resorting to a prevarication. We never had a cook who didn't look upon me as a sort of father to her. It has been your fault that they have left. You have met them with an icy glare; you have ground them under the iron heel; you have used them as if they had no souls nor feelings. I've watched you, and I've often wondered why some of the poor creatures didn't turn on you with the carving knife."

"That's all nonsense," quietly replied Mrs. Bowser.

"Nonsense, is it! Is it nonsense to put your heel on the neck of a girl obliged to work for her living? Is it nonsense for you to go round with your nose in the air and never think of her soul? Is it nonsense for you to nag, and threaten, and worry until a girl doing her best is driven to pack up her things and leave?"

"Perhaps you can do better?"

"I know I can."

"Then why don't you experiment?"

"I will. Yes, woman, I will show you that, by proper treatment and due respect for her feelings, a girl can be kept in this house for years, instead of days. Why, you don't understand human nature, to begin with. If I were a working girl, and you talked to me as I've heard you talk to some of the applicants, I'd drown myself before I'd come to you!"

"There's an advertisement for the morning paper," said Mrs. Bowser, "and if you'll stay home for a couple of hours and select a cook, I shall be greatly obliged to you."

"I'll do it, and if I don't find one who'll want to stay with us as long as she lives you can set it down that your conduct has given our house a bad name. I know that other families keep girls for years and years, and I'm sure we could if you treated them like human beings."

Mr. Bowser had a good deal more to say before bedtime, but Mrs. Bowser let him go on and waited for her revenge. Breakfast had scarcely been cleared away next morning before a girl arrived in answer to the advertisement. It was left to Mr. Bowser to welcome her, and he met her with a smile and began:

"I am glad to see you. The promptness with which you have answered the advertisement speaks well for you. What wages do you want per month?"

"How does it come that you are choosing the servant?" asked the girl.

"Because I think I understand them better than my wife does."

"Oh! I see. Then you are to boss the kitchen?"

"In a general way, yes."

"Then I don't want the place! I wouldn't work where I had to take orders from a man!"

She was gone before Mr. Bowser could get out another word, but while he was wondering what was the matter with her a second applicant arrived.

"Is the missus ill and abed?" she queried as she got inside the door

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"Not at all," replied Mr. Bowser. "My wife has had so much trouble with servants that I thought I would do the engaging this time."

"But what do you know about the kitchen and cooking?"

"A good deal, my dear girl—a good deal. You see——"

"I see that it's a house where there would be trouble in no time, and I won't take the place!" said the girl as she backed out.

Mr. Bowser felt a chill pass over him, but he braced himself up and tried to look bland as No. 3 rang the bell. The girl looked at him with doubt and suspicion, but waited to hear what he had to say.

"You see," he began, "my wife and I differ somewhat on this servant problem. It never seems to occur to her that the girl in the kitchen has a soul."

"But what's a cook's soul to do with the work?" asked the applicant.

"You—you don't exactly understand me. You have a soul, of course. You also have feelings. It must be hard enough for you to have to toil from day to day for one pound per month, but when on top of that the woman of the house is constantly grinding you into the dust, your outraged feelings must—must——"

"I don't want the place!" said the girl, as she started for the door.

"But, my dear girl——"

"I have never worked in a lunatic asylum, and I never shall!" she added as she went out.

There was something wrong with Mr. Bowser's system. He realised it, but he was determined to see it through. No. 4 appeared almost as soon as No. 3 had departed, and after a bland welcome, he said:

"Have you ever worked in a family where the woman treated you as if you had no soul?"

"No, sir," she promptly replied.

"If you could find a place where the family would look upon you as a human being—where your feelings would be respected—where there would be no yawning gulf between employer and employée—if you——"

"Who runs the kitchen here?" interrupted the girl as she rose up.

"Well, my wife has been running it, you know, but she has had so much trouble with her girls that I have decided to take it over."

"Then I wouldn't care for the place! When a man has to turn boss of his own kitchen, he'd better do the cooking as well!"

The advertisement brought nine girls in all. In each instance Mr. Bowser set out to tell them that it was a place in which it would be recognised that they had souls and feelings, but in each instance, also, he was choked off and the applicant left. Two of the girls threw out hints that he had wheels in his head, a third took him for a lecturer, and a fourth said she was sorry for his wife. When the ninth and last had disappeared, Mr. Bowser put on his hat and started for his office without a word to Mrs. Bowser. When he came home to dinner, and found a girl from the registry office in the kitchen, he had no remarks to make. Mrs. Bowser tried to lead him round to it, but he only glared at her across the table, and helped himself to some more chicken.

M. QUAD.

Next Week: He Makes a Discovery Which Hurts His Feelings.

No One Knows When the War will End,

BUT

£250 will be given to the reader of PEARSON'S WEEKLY from whom we receive a Coupon bearing the exact date upon which the

British Flag Will be Officially Hoisted in Pretoria.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO.

Fill in the coupon below.
Send it in to us as soon as you like.
Send as many coupons as you like.

If two competitors name the exact day the money will go to the one who gives the correct hour of that day. If two or more give the correct day and hour the £250 in full will go to him whose coupon we received bearing the earliest date of sending in. Pretoria time, which is about an hour and three-quarters in advance of English time, must be stated.

The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

Address all envelopes to "War Editor, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C."

Pretoria Coupon, S.S. *June 9, 1900.*

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Day..... *Hour*.....
(Pretoria time.)

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900 unless they state otherwise.

This notice and coupon also appear every week in the *Illustrated Weekly News, Home Notes, The Sunday Reader, Pearson's Weekly*, and *Big Budget*. Readers of *Short Stories* may enter with this coupon.

PRETORIA COUPON.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

As stated in the conditions, the Editor reserves the right to close the Competition at one day's notice. As it is obviously impossible for us to tell when the British Flag will be hoisted in Pretoria, and as we desire to give readers as long a time as possible to send their attempts, we cannot name here the exact date of closing. This date will, therefore, be announced in the columns of the "DAILY EXPRESS," and all Coupons sent in after that date—no matter if they appear in a copy of "SHORT STORIES" which you did not get until after that date—will be disqualified. Therefore, send in your Coupons at once. For all we know, the closing day may be to-morrow.

STOP!
WOMEN!
at the nearest newsagent
and buy
Home Notes

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A Snapshot—And After.

Jack St. Aubyn, attired in a faultless and spotless yachting suit, ran up the steps of one of the best hotels in Cowes and approached a charming-looking girl and her father, who were seated on the verandah watching the people.

"Good morning, Miss Westwood," exclaimed the young man, airily, by way of greeting. "Have you any plans for this morning?"

"Yes, sir!" snapped the old gentleman, before his daughter could reply. "My daughter has made plans for the morning. She intends to spend it in a boat, with no other company than her own."

A quick crimson mounted to the young man's face, but turning to the speaker, he composedly replied:

"Your daughter surely could find no more delightful company. Pardon my intrusion."

And with a graceful bow and a half-amused, half-questioning glance at the young lady, he strolled away.

Winnie watched him go down the smooth walk, with easy, swinging strides, until he was out of sight, and then turned to her father.

"Daddy, why are you always so brusque and disagreeable to Mr. St. Aubyn, when you are kindness itself to everyone else?"

"Because he is an ass," growled Mr. Westwood, with a scowl of displeasure.

"I'm sure he is nothing of the sort," argued his daughter, flushing and drawing herself up rather stiffly. "He is courteous, well-bred, handsome, and has a splendid position for a man of his age; and all through his own exertions, too."

"That's just it," replied her father, testily. "That's what makes me so blamed mad—the prig is so confoundedly proud and independent. Did it all himself, and has nobody to thank. Bah! he makes me sick, he does. All those high and mighty airs, just because he has struck a little luck, when there's many a poor devil, worth his weight in gold, who is grubbing along at starvation wages."

"Well, under the circumstances, I think he has a right to be proud; and if he is, you cannot say he is either vain or haughty."

"Oh! you know all about it, do you? Well, I'm off; I'll suffocate if I stay on this verandah another minute. There's not a breath of air. What are you going to do with yourself this morning, dear?"

"You have made my programme for me, and I shall abide by it," said Winnie, meekly. "I'm going to have the boat and take things easy all the morning."

"All right. Hurry along then, and I'll see you safely start."

Half an hour later Mr. Westwood's eyes glowed with fatherly pride as he watched the light boat shoot out over the placid waters of Spithead, skilfully propelled by the steady trained stroke of his daughter's oars; and after waving his handkerchief to her, addressed himself to the enjoyment of his latest and most enthusiastic hobby—snap-shot photography. It was comforting to this old plutocrat to think that Winnie was alone on the water, where that young scrub, St. Aubyn, could not get at her.

"Why doesn't he keep away from Winnie? Goodness knows. I've given him hints enough and pretty broad ones, too, but men of his stamp never will take a hint. And you can't make him mad. Why, if I had been in his place I'd have thrashed myself long ago. He's always got some sugar-coated speech ready that makes a man feel a fool."

On the following night Mr. Westwood was in his element. He had arranged a little entertainment in the hotel drawing-room for the benefit of the family of a poor man who had been drowned in the surf.

All the talent in the hotel was pressed into service. The programme was to include vocal and instrumental music, recitations, legerdemain and what not?

Mr. Westwood was the moving spirit of the whole affair and his portly form was seen everywhere—now among the audience applauding vigorously, now at the temporized box office near the door of the drawing-room—a moment later in the impromptu green-room, overhauling the properties.

He not only ran the curtain up and down, but operated it himself and acted as prompter from the wings, in a hoarse whisper, audible throughout the capacious room.

Indeed, he exerted himself so unceasingly that before the evening was half gone he was puffing like a fish out of water, while a tiara of perspiration beads stood on his rubicund brow.

The last number on the programme promised to be the most interesting and amusing; for Mr. Westwood was to show a series of lantern slides, with the aid of an electrical stereopticon, of instantaneous photographs which he had taken. He called them "unique postures" and all were to be local hits.

The first view showed a well-known villager, standing on the seawall, apparently in deep dejection, while his colossal wife was ostensibly chastising him with an umbrella. In the distance, two young girls were laughingly gazing on the spectacle.

The second picture was that of the interior of a typical boatman's cottage, evidently taken through a window, and revealed the boatman in the act of petting his dog. The third represented a party of bathers disporting themselves in the sea.

"Here is one," said Mr. Westwood, as he adjusted the next view, "of a couple of turtle doves I caught spooning in a boat on the sea yesterday. The distance from shore was so great that the figures came out very small on the plates, but the magnifying lens may help matters."

The picture was focussed on the screen, and presently a storm of applause burst from the audience. With a gasp of horror and dismay, Mr. Westwood turned off the electric current and fled from the scene.

* * * * *

"You see," said Jack St. Aubyn to a friend the next day, "the old fellow took that way of announcing my engagement to his daughter, Winnie. Rather an odd idea wasn't it?"

A. M. E.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Eve of Amajuba.

On Thursday, the 26th of February, 1897, the sun set behind the northern spur of the Drakensberg Mountains in the midst of a wild chaos of stormed-tossed clouds of all shades of colour from a thunderous blue-purple to a deep and angry blood-red. The day had been one of fitful showers, brief bursts of sunshine, and fierce, but swiftly-passing storms of rain and hail and lightning.

It seemed, indeed, as though Nature had set herself to work to arrange a fitting *mise en scène* for the tragedy which the sun was destined to look upon when he rose again—a tragedy upon which the curtain of Destiny would not fall until the fate of a continent, and perchance of an empire, stretching through many continents, had been decided—for this was the eve, not only of a crisis for the white races of South Africa, but also of another and greater crisis amidst which was to be decided the far wider question as to whether the Empire which had so completely eclipsed the glories of Ancient Rome had reached, as Rome had done in the August an Age, the apex of power where the upward road becomes the downward, or whether the arm that had so often hewn its way to victory was still strong to strike in defence of its ancient rights and the material things which the valour that nerved it had won.

As the history of all empires has shown, the day upon which any integral portion of a dominion is torn by hostile force from the imperial body, is for that dominion the day of Fate and the beginning of its ruin.

To-morrow was to be such a day for the Empire of Britain. Within the next few hours Africa was to be held or lost. If held, well and good, for then for the thousandth time the Anglo-Saxon would have proved that he was strong to keep, as well as bold to take. If lost, then South Africa would be but the first of the limbs of the once mighty organism that would be torn away by the enemies who would see in its loss the first unquestionable sign of the paralysis of the Colossus whose once-mighty arm encircled the world.

As Prince Paul Regna and his daughter were saying to each other that same evening in Pretoria, if Britain lost South Africa to-morrow, she would lose India the day after, Australia and Canada only a little later on, and so one by one the jewels would be torn from her imperial crown, and the broad lands that she had won would be snatched away peacemeal, until at last, thrust down to the level of a third-rate Power, she would realise the ideal of the Little Englander, wipe out four hundred years of her history, and exchange the policy of a world-wide Empire for the parochial administration of two or three little islands.

Nothing less than this depended upon the issue of the conflict that was to be waged between the two forces which confronted each other that evening on the slopes of Amajuba Hill and its attendant heights, and on the wide veldt which stretched away northward beyond the Vaal River.

There could hardly have been a greater contrast than that which existed between the first and second battles of Amajuba. The first had been a climax of a series of skirmishes between forces almost absurdly small in comparison with the magnitude of the interests for which they were contending. On the one side rashness, inexperience, and incapacity had combined to court the disaster, of which, on the other side, skill, knowledge, and undeniable valour had taken the fullest advantage.

On the night of Saturday, February 26th, 1881, Sir George Colley had occupied Amajuba with a force of thirty-five officers and six hundred and ninety-three men, unsupported by a single piece of artillery, since it had been found impossible to get the guns to the top of the mountain. Against him was pitted a force of Boers whose strength will probably never be accurately known any more than its losses will, but which was probably not less than three thousand men in all, not a man of whom pulled a trigger till he had made sure that his bullet would find its mark.

On the night of Friday, February 26th, 1897, the army of the Transvaal, thirty-five thousand strong, fully equipped with artillery and machine-guns, and all the appliances of modern war that money could buy, and reinforced by between ten and twelve thousand Free State burghers and fugitive rebels from the Cape and Natal, confronted a British force posted along the chain of hills which form the northern frontier-bulwarks of Natal, and this force numbered between twenty-four and twenty-five thousand men of all arms.

Of these some ten thousand were composed of the Regulars which had formed the garrison of Maritzburg at the outbreak of the war, the Volunteer forces of the colony, and the loyal burghers, and last but not least the Johannesburg contingent, which, under the leadership of Commander Robinson, now duly gazetted Colonel in the Colonial forces,

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had brought the survivors of the Golden City so brilliantly through the heart of the enemy's country.

From the Cape had come a force of some fifteen thousand men, almost identical as regards composition with the two armies which had won the triumphs of Caledon, Hex River, Worcester, and Tulbagh Basin, and with them had come up from the fleet a Naval Brigade about a thousand strong, who held a post of honour on the historic Laings Nek with three Maxims, two Maxim-Nordenfeldts, and two seven-pounders.

Along the rest of the British lines were planted in every possible position of advantage nearly a hundred and fifty pieces of artillery and machine-guns, from forty-pounder quick-firers to the light ·45 Maxims. To pit against these the Boer army had about a hundred guns, from the 15 centimetre Krupp field-piece to the ·45 Maxim.

The reason for this great superiority of the British force in artillery furnishes an important clue to the true inwardness of the situation. This time the Boers, instead of a brave but rash and, for this kind of warfare, quite incompetent General, had to deal with a man far-seeing, perfectly acquainted with their method of warfare, and as shrewd and hard-headed as the best of them.

It was a master-stroke of strategy that had drawn the whole strength of the Transvaal into the plains of Volksrust and the slopes of the Drakensberg. Since the fall of Bloemfontein not a waggon load of food had entered the Transvaal, and very little had got in between then and the taking of Delagoa Bay. The rinderpest had made frightful havoc of the flocks and herds of the Boer, now his mainstay and almost his sole means of subsistence, and the meaning of all this was that the Boer army would soon be forced to fight, not only for victory but for food.

For a week now the two armies had confronted each other, each ever growing in strength as reinforcements came up, but not a shot had been fired from the English lines beyond sighting shots to get the range of the different Boer positions, and those which had been fired strictly on the defensive to repel isolated and insignificant attacks, or to drive back parties of Boers who wanted to make too close an acquaintance with the disposition of the British forces.

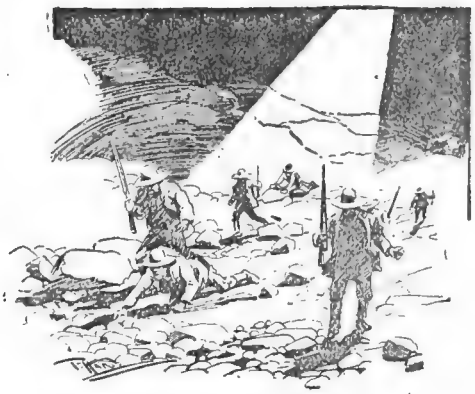
Sir Charles Warren's orders had been as strict as his plan of action was clear and perfectly defined. Not a man was to show himself, not a shot was to be fired, and not a move

The army of the Transvaal, reinforced by the Free State burghers, confronted a British force.

was to be made save in obedience to his specific commands. The defensive attitude was rigidly adhered to, his communications with the coast were rapid and unimpeded, his commissariat was in perfect order, and he could feed his army indefinitely and wait his time at his ease, while the Boers ere long must either fight or starve.

Hence they must be the attacking force. They must storm the krantzes and kopjes, and make their way through the deep defiles which, the moment that they attempted the task, would be swept clear by the death-storms that would burst from rifle and cannon and machine-gun.

The Boer leaders knew this as well as Sir Charles himself



A long white shaft of light flashed down.

did, and they knew, too, that unless they could strike the decisive blow swiftly, now that the crisis of Fate had really come, General Carrington, with his victorious army of some sixteen thousand men, flushed with triumph and burning to take their share in paying off the long-standing score, would cross the Klip River and take them in flank. If this happened before the British positions had been stormed, nothing but utter rout and disastrous retreat on Pretoria could follow.

Their only chance of victory, even of salvation, thus lay in defeating the two British forces in turn before they had time to unite. It was therefore for reasons of prudence as well as of sentiment that the anniversary of Amajuba had been chosen for the general assault.

But, as it chanced, the elements themselves conspired to enable the British commander to most effectually counter the first move of President Kruger and his generals. Darkness had come down in the midst of an absolute calm on earth and in the air, a gloom so black and impenetrable that all sense of distance and direction seemed lost in it. Overhead the clouds hung black and low, almost level with the flat top of Amajuba.

Conditions more perfectly suited to surprise-attacks or secret flanking-movements could not have been imagined, and the Boer leaders decided to take advantage of them. So about nine o'clock, when the darkness had become complete, an irregular column of three thousand Boers on foot, armed with rifle and revolver, moved out from the right wing to the westward of Volksrust, and began to ascend the slopes between the Inquela Mountain and Amajuba, while another, nearly five thousand strong, also on foot, began to make its way towards the northern slopes leading up to Laings Nek on either side of the railway tunnel.

Within the English lines all was darkness and absolute silence. Of all the thousands of men that were there, not one gave a sign of his presence, and the Boers crept on, growing more and more certain with every yard they made, that they would be able to carry out their design, and gain the two coveted positions from which, when the light came back, they would be able to deliver their contemplated flank-attacks when the general assault was made on the front.

But suddenly, when they were a little more than half way up the slopes, something like a big, white, many-rayed star blazed out above the highest point of Amajuba, and then,

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to their amazement and consternation, it began to rise slowly into the air, and move about to and fro. Then a long white shaft of light flashed down from it, hovered for a moment or two in mid-air, and then fell on the middle slopes below Laings Nek and showed them to be crowded with stealthily creeping figures.

Instantly the whole of that side of the mountain seemed to burst out into thunder and flame: the booming of the

The Naval Brigade was slowly rolling the column back.

big guns roared through the rattle and crash of the lighter artillery, and all down the slope the quick flashes of the bursting shells blazed out, and the hurricane storm of bullets went spattering over the stones, ripping up the turf, and striking men down by scores. Then the cannonade stopped, ringing cheers burst out from the rocks above, and the Naval Brigade charged down with the bayonet on to the astounded Boers. At first they gave way before the irresistible rush, but after a while the confidence of superior numbers came back to them, and they turned and gave back shot for shot, and blow for blow.

Meanwhile the light from the clouds had veered round to the eastward, sweeping the plain as it went until it stopped and rested across the path of the second column. Then the storm of shot and shell burst out again from a score of hidden batteries, and so fierce was the converging fire that for a few minutes the head of the column melted away as it advanced. Then came the sound of a bugle, the sharp, ringing rattle of steel, and a brief order, followed by a cheer and the stamping of many feet.

Out of the gloom of the defiles, with the white light behind them gleaming on their bayonets, and shining full in the dazzled eyes of the attacking column, five hundred redcoats of the Hampshire and Leicestershire Regiments came at a double, and from a thousand points about the rugged hillsides little jets of pale flame spurted out, and a swift pattering hail of bullets began to rain down on every portion of the Boer column that the light fell upon.

Instantly, and as though by instinct, every man of them went down among the stones, taking what shelter he could find, and an irregular but pretty effective volley was poured into the advancing redcoats. A score or so of the brave fellows rolled over, their fighting done for ever, but the rest were close up now, and there was no time for another volley before their angrily-exultant cheer rang out, and their united charge brought the bayonets within striking distance.

It was a strange scene of mingled light and darkness, and the work was after Mr. Tommy Atkins' own heart. Thanks to the authorities which rule his fate, he is not very much of a shot, but put a bayonet on the end of his rifle and get him within arm's length of his enemy and he is about the most dangerous fighting animal on earth. As the light hovered down the defile up which the Boers had sought to make their secret entry, it showed them to be split up in groups lying or crouching down under cover. As each of these groups were disclosed, a party of the Leicester-hire and Hampshire men went at it, broke it up, and routed it out.

Meanwhile a dozen field search-lights had begun to flash hither and thither about the slopes of the mountain, and by their light it could be seen that the Naval Brigade was slowly rolling the other column back, while far out on the veldt the piercing beams showed huge, dim shapes of squadrons of horse and foot, with here and there a battery of artillery, all in motion and all converging on the British centre.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Waterloo of Africa.

For the moment it seemed as though the army of the Transvaal were about to follow up the flanking attempt of the two columns by a general assault under cover of the darkness. They, too, brought their searchlights into play, and opened a heavy cannonade on the batteries which they were able to locate, but hardly had their gunners got to work than guns began to flash out all along the whole line of the British positions, and the terribly destructive effect of the forty-pound shells as they burst about their batteries speedily convinced the Boer artillerists that they had far heavier metal than their own to contend against, and many more guns to boot.

As the attack of the two columns had manifestly failed as a surprise, and as President Kruger and his generals felt that in spite of their great superiority in numbers they had no men to spare, they ordered the columns to fall back on the main lines at once—a movement which they performed with somewhat more of prudent haste than manly dignity. The Naval Brigade and the Red-coats pursued them till they were recalled by the bugle, and then all of a sudden the firing stopped, the lights died out, and darkness and silence reigned supreme again.

These two abortive attacks had taught the Boers three things. First, that however quiet they might keep their men, the British commanders were not to be caught napping; second, that to carry the positions by direct assault from the front could only be done at enormous cost of life; and, third, that the British artillery was vastly superior to theirs both in strength and handling. In view of these circumstances it was resolved, after about half-an-hour's consultation, to make an immediate move under cover of the darkness on Wakkerstroom, a town on the extreme right of the British position, seven or eight miles to the south-east of Volksrust.

The march was accomplished with the celerity and secrecy which has always characterised the movements of the Boer forces, and by daybreak fully twenty thousand men with fifteen guns were within striking distance of the little township.

The balance of the night had passed without any further manifestations of hostility against the British centre and left, and at daybreak Sir Charles Warren ordered his advanced batteries to open the battle by shelling Volksrust, about which some twelve or fifteen thousand Boers, with half the force of the States Artillery, were concentrated. Almost at the same time the eastern division of the Transvaal Army began to shell Wakkerstroom, which had been occupied some days by a force of about three thousand men with six field-pieces and four Maxims.

The moment that the daylight became bright enough for accurate shooting, the Boers, impelled by the urgent orders of their Generals and an earnest appeal from the President, accepted the inevitable, and advanced to a general assault. It was now that the advantages of that mode of fighting of which they are such perfect masters became manifest.

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As Sir Evelyn Wood had said after the first war, they were the finest mounted infantry in the world.

They swept at a gallop over the exposed portions of the veld. Scores of them fell under the rapid and accurate artillery and machine-gun fire, but still the columns kept on in open order and with the determined bravery, for now indeed there was no turning back.

Somehow or other the summit of the ridge had to be gained, and the British line pierced. If this were not done they might hurl themselves again and again against the impregnable mountain wall until their strength was fully broken, and then the British centre and left would swing round and take the force which was attacking Wakkerstroom in the rear.

Their advance was covered by the guns on the heights to the eastward of Volksrust, which kept up an incessant fire on the British batteries, and under it they pushed on with dogged and desperate valour, until at last the broken ground of the slopes was reached, and there among the boulders, rocks, and intersecting ravine, thousands of men seemed to be swallowed up by the earth as completely as though it had opened beneath them. Then, as soon as this movement had been accomplished, their artillery began to move, battery by battery, round to the eastward with the obvious intention of concentrating the attack upon Wakkerstroom, where the British line was weakest.

Shortly after nine o'clock two columns led by Lucas Meyer and Schalk Burger, each about four thousand strong, advanced in the teeth of a terribly destructive fire up each side of the railway line along the incline which leads to the mouth of the Laings Nek tunnel. They came on in their usual fashion, riding hard when the ground was good, and then, the moment they reached anything like cover, stopping, dismounting, and pouring in their volleys with deliberate aim and fatal effect. Not a man in the British lines could show himself but a bullet found him and he went over either dead or badly wounded.

Simultaneously from the broken ground to the right there rose up thousands of spurts of fire and little transient puffs of steamy smoke, and the upper slopes of the mountain and the ridge were swept by an incessant hail of bullets which struck down every man and horse that was not under cover.

Shells were rained upon the ground occupied by the hidden sharp-shooters, and these, bursting among the rocks and stones, did terrible execution, but the Boer marksmen stuck manfully to their positions, and meanwhile the German gunners of the States Artillery were making excellent practice with their 15-centimetre Krupps, and the execution done by shell-fire was by no means all on one side.

Yard by yard Commandants Meyer and Burger fought their way up the line, losing heavily, but inflicting equal loss in their turn, dodging from stone to stone, and shooting down nearly every man who showed himself, with an aim which was wonderfully steady and accurate considering the circumstances. For a time it seemed as though their numbers, their excellent shooting, and their really admirable resolution must carry all before them and take them through the heart of the British centre.

They were fighting for everything that they had on the very ground on which they had won their independence sixteen years before, and many a man of them remembered as he sent his bullets home how he had climbed these same heights as a boy and laughed at the English *rooibaatjes* as they fled like sheep down the hillsides, while he took pot-shots at their flying forms as he would have done at a herd of buck.

But, however worthy of a better fate their valour may have been, their hopes were destined to a sudden and bitter disappointment. The set and studied warfare of to-day was not the irregular skirmishing which they had called battles sixteen years before. It was a thing of deliberate calculation and almost mathematical exactness. They never guessed that they had in reality been allowed to come thus far, any more than they suspected by what means they would be prevented from going farther.

They had got to within about two hundred yards of the tunnel when suddenly the fire from the batteries stopped. Thinking that the British ammunition had failed, or that an English flag of the usual colour was about to be hoisted,

The armoured train came rushing down the incline right into their midst.

they raised a loud, hoarse shout of triumph, and rushed forward, crowding on to the line from both sides.

Then out of the mouth of the tunnel there came a dull rumble rapidly growing louder; then a drifting cloud of mingled smoke and steam rolled out, and then, like some strange demon of destruction emerging from the very bowels of the earth, Commander Robertson's armoured train, the now famous "No. 3," thundered out of the darkness into the light, and came rushing down the incline right into the midst of them.

The shout of triumph was instantly changed for yells and cries of astonishment and terror, but these were speedily drowned by the grinding roar and rattle of the machine and quick-firing guns with which the armoured train was bristling from end to end. It was in vain that they struggled in a now tumultuous mob to get clear of the line in time, and to regain the cover of the rocks, and stones, and broken ground.

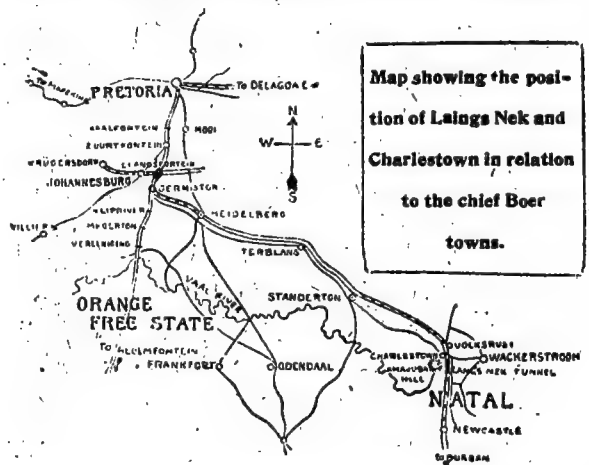
The pitiless iron monster rushed down on them at a speed of nearly forty miles an hour, hurling them dead or maimed to right and left, or grinding them out of all human shape under its wheels, and those who had escaped its rush went down in hundreds on either hand, and in front of it, under the hurricane of shells and bullets which it continued to vomit forth, until the ground within the zone of fire was literally swept clear of every living thing, after which the two engines of the armoured train were reversed, and it climbed up the incline and disappeared into the tunnel out of reach of the Boer artillerists.

Then the batteries opened out afresh on the hidden marksmen to the eastward, and, after a brief and deadly storm of shell-fire, the Hampshire Regiment, the Cape Highlanders, a detachment of Cape Rifles, the Natal Royals, and the Durban Light Infantry were ordered to go in with the bayonet and clear them out.

But the fate of the two attacking columns, which had been almost annihilated before they got under cover or out of range, had for the time being taken a good deal of the heart out of them, and added to this, now that they were deprived of the support of the columns, they stood a very good chance of being surrounded. Their leaders, therefore, decided not to wait for a taste of the dreaded cold steel. The result was that before the Loyalist brigade got within

charging distance, they had mounted and were riding for their lives to gain the shelter of their batteries.

Meanwhile three other attacks had been taking place simultaneously—one upon the Nek, between Amajuba and the Inquela Mountain, another along the Free State Border to the extreme British left, and another on Wakkerstroom to the extreme right, and by this time over sixty thousand men and nearly two hundred guns were actually engaged.



Map showing the position of Laings Nek and Charlestown in relation to the chief Boer towns.

Laings Nek, as has been seen, had proved itself as impregnable to the Boers as, sixteen years before, it had proved to the British. On the other Pass the Naval Brigade, supported by three companies of the Cape Mounted Infantry and two of the Natal Frontier Force, hurled back assault after assault during nearly two hours of continuous fighting. To the left also the attack from the direction of Gans Vlei, made by three thousand of the Free State burghers, who had come over to help their kinsmen, was held in check for over an hour, and finally repulsed with severe loss by fifteen hundred men of the Australian and Canadian contingents supported by two companies of the Natal Carbineers.

But by far the severest contest was by this time being waged round Wakkerstroom, the attack on which was led by the veteran Commandant-General Joubert and the President himself, with Colonel Henning Pretorious directing the artillery. Wakkerstroom was now so far the key of the position, that if the Boers succeeded in taking it they would be able to turn the British right and force a retreat on Charlestown and Newcastle.

Sir Charles Warren was therefore forced to considerably weaken his extended line in order to send up the necessary reinforcements; and even when he had sent every man that he could spare, without losing the command of the practicable roads through his centre and left, the assailants still outnumbered the defenders by more than two to one, and reinforcements were continually coming in from the north and west.

It was here that the most desperate battle of the whole war took place. The Boers, fighting under the eyes of their President, and led by their most skilful leaders, made use of every advantage that their style of warfare and perfect acquaintance with the ground gave them. No fewer than four times were the British regulars and Colonial forces driven out of the town, and four times, as the reinforcements came up the road from Charlestown, did they go in and drive the Boers out in their turn.

When the news was brought up to the President of the repulse of the attacks on the centre and left, and of the decimation of the columns of Commandant Meyer and Burger, he ordered every available man and gun to be brought up, so that he might concentrate the whole strength on Wakkerstroom and roll up the British right by sheer weight of numbers. He saw clearly—just as clearly as Sir Charles Warren himself did—that if he could once get possession of Wakkerstroom and the Charlestown Road the British positions would be turned, and the day would be his. As a matter of fact, the fate of that little town among the hills was just then the fate of Africa.

As hour after hour went by and more of the Boer troops were brought up and more of the guns got into position the more the good fortune of the morning seemed in danger of being turned to naught, yet the Loyalists, outnumbered by fully three to one, and now over-matched in artillery as well, fought on with a resolution which refused to recognise the possibility of defeat.

At length, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Sir Charles Warren, who was standing with General Goodenough and his staff on the spur of a hill watching the battle, shook his head and said:

"It's no use. They're too strong down yonder, and they are getting reinforcements every hour. We must have every man up and every gun that can be moved. If we lose Wakkerstroom it's all up. I confess I never thought these fellows would fight so splendidly as they have done. I hope to God Carrington gets here before nightfall. I can understand just now what Wellington felt at Waterloo. Hullo What the dickens is up now? They can't be retreating just as they had almost got the place. However, let every man we've got be thrown into the place. If they begin to move, we must keep them moving. They've evidently had some pretty startling news."

"Ah, listen!" interrupted General Goodenough, holding up his hand. "I fancy I heard guns and machine-fire to the westward. I wonder whether they're ours or Carrington's?"

"If they're Carrington's," replied Sir Charles quietly,

"I confess I never thought these fellows would fight so splendidly."

"South Africa will be ours by sundown. If not—well, I suppose it will be something like Waterloo with Blucher left out."

CHAPTER XLIV.

"Remember where you are, Boys!"

The immediate cause of the unexpected movement in the then headquarters of the Transvaal army, and the rapid withdrawal of the now overwhelmingly numerous forces which had been poured out into Wakkerstroom

was the arrival of half-a-dozen mounted men, whose horses didn't seem to have another stride left in them.

They had come at a gallop from beyond the extreme British left with the news that a new British army, led by the redoubtable and cordially-hated "Butcher Carrington," had fought its way across the Klip river in the teeth of a strenuous opposition from the Free State burghers and the garrison that was left in Volksrust, and was advancing rapidly along the southern bank of the Vaal.

It was composed of British regulars and sailors, Rhodesian troopers, and that legion of Matabele warriors whose fame had already spread through the length and breadth of the two Republics. In addition to these, clouds of wild horsemen, no doubt the ever-dreaded Basutos, had been seen massed along the Free State side of the Klip river, seemingly ready to cross at a moment's notice.

No more momentous or exasperating news could possibly have been conveyed to President Kruger and his generals than this. In another couple of hours at most they must inevitably have marched through the ruins of Wakkerstroom into Natal. From there to Charlestown would have been little more than a military promenade. At Charlestown they would have seized the railway, then Newcastle would have fallen, and after that Maritzburg, from whence they could have dictated terms of peace to the British Government, as they virtually had done after the first battle of Amajuba.

If something had only delayed the coming of this man who had so unexpectedly brought the beginnings of trouble upon them in the North, all might and probably would have been well, but that something had not happened, and here he had come just in time to snatch the fruits of almost certain victory from them.

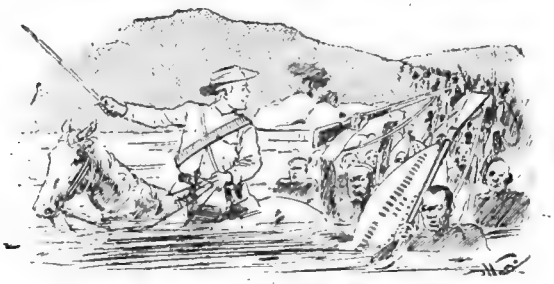
To continue the assault on Wakkerstroom would now be little short of madness, for the news must soon reach the British Commander-in-Chief. His troops, inspired with new hope, would fight with redoubled resolution, and even an hour's delay would be fatal. The troops occupying the British centre and left would join hands with their deliverers, and the army of the Transvaal, caught on front and flank and rear, assailed by fresh and victorious troops, and flanked by unknown thousands of the fierce and vengeful Basutos, would be hemmed in among the mountains and cut to pieces in detail. An instant retreat on Volksrust was the only possible road to safety, and a pitched battle under the shadow of Amajuba Hill offered the now only remaining hope of victory.

Hardly had the orders to retreat begun to be obeyed by the reluctant and wondering Boers when the sun, which had been obscured for the greater part of the day, burst suddenly through the dissolving clouds like an omen of new hope for the army which had been so nearly defeated, and instantly the heliograph signals began to flash from the westward from point to point along the range, conveying the good tidings to the British generals.

A brief consultation resulted in the immediate issue of orders for the whole British force to advance and press upon the rear of the retreating Boers. Meanwhile, too, signals were flashed back to the left, informing General Carrington of the position of affairs, and ordering all the lighter batteries to be pushed forward so as to command the drifts of the Vaal and Klip rivers, and to the armoured train, to hold itself in readiness to advance as far as the state of the line would permit it, and, if necessary, to prevent any attack on the part of the Boers to retreat by train from Volksrust.

The position of affairs now virtually resolved itself into a race between the army of the Transvaal, and what must now be called the two sections of the British forces. If the Boer leaders could get their men back across the Klip River, and reach Volksrust before they were caught between the two converging armies, they might possibly give successful battle to both of them, for it was probable that they were still equal in numbers of both combined. But if General Carrington succeeded in getting to Volksrust first they would have no alternative save unconditional surrender or fighting their battle with an enemy on both flanks and the guns of the British mountain batteries in their rear.

The retreat, however, speedily resolved itself into a running fight. The British troops in the enthusiasm of re-action from the dogged resolution to die where they stood rather than let the enemy set foot on British soil, to the new-born hope of joining hands with their comrades from the west, and crushing that enemy in the grim embrace of battle, forgot all the fatigue of the long hours of



The Basutos were taken across the river.

fighting; wounds ceased to give pain, hunger and thirst seemed to vanish as if by magic, and all that they remembered was that they had nearly been defeated, and that men of their own blood and race had saved them from the impending disaster.

Men who a few minutes before had been longing to lie down and go to sleep through sheer weariness, now stepped out with long swinging strides as though they had just turned out of their bivouacs. Three batteries of the States Artillery were charged and carried with a rush in the very act of lumbering up to follow the retreat, and it was even a matter of some difficulty for the British officers to restrain their men from pressing imprudently close on the rear of the retiring enemy, so great are the marvels that new-born hope can accomplish.

General Carrington, the Blücher of this later Waterloo, had made a series of forced marches of some hundred and forty miles in six days, from Blauwbosch Pont, on the Bloemfontein-Johannesburg railway, where he had detrained his men, to the banks of the Klip river, at the point where it cuts through the Drakensberg range to the west of Volksrust.

He had reached the drift shortly after two on the afternoon of the day of battle.

His passage had been opposed by a force of about two thousand Free State burghers, who had checked him for about half-an-hour until Major Bryan had taken his dusky warriors through the water about a mile to the westward, and thrown them in a furious charge on their right flank, at the same moment that the fifteen hundred Australians and the two companies of Natal Carbineers, who had held the position on the extreme British left, came down the slopes and took them in the rear.

These two attacks crushed them up together in such fashion that a few minutes machine-gun and artillery fire across the river on their centre broke them up into utter disorder.

Then the Rhodesian troopers charged through the drift, closely followed by the Leicestershire and York and Lancaster Regiments with the bayonet, and ten minutes later they were scattering over the plain carrying the news of disaster to Volksrust and Wakkerstroom.

Not a moment was lost, for no one knew how much might be dependent just then upon rapid movement. The artillery and machine-guns were ferried across on barrel

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rafts, which had been brought along for the purpose, and all the waggons, save the lighter ones that carried the ammunition, were left behind.

The Basuto horsemen were taken across the river and told to push north-eastward, and place themselves between Volksrust and Standerton, to cut off the Boer retreat to the north, and then General Carrington led the rest of his army straight on the Transvaal frontier-town.

Just as it debouched on to the open plain between the slopes of the mountains and Volksrust the head of the

In the centre of one of the groups rose the burly form of the President.

Transvaal army was sighted in full retreat from the east ward, and the roll of continuous firing came rumbling up from their rear.

"That's all right!" said the General, with characteristic terseness of speech. "Sir Charles is coming up behind them. We've got the hills to the south, and the Basutos to the north, and if they get away now it will be our fault."

That was the situation in a sentence. Orders were given with rapidity and decision, and obeyed just as rapidly and precisely. The artillery and cavalry went over the ground almost at a gallop. Troop after troop and battery after battery deployed into its appointed position, and soon the flash of the guns and the scream and bang of the bursting shells, mingling with the crash and roar of the machine-guns on front and flank and rear, told the leaders of the Transvaal army that they had lost the race and that the hour of destiny was about to strike.

What happened during the next two hours was rather a *mêlée* on a gigantic scale than a set battle. There were hurricanes of shot and shell and machine-fire, followed by furious charges of horse, met by deadly volleys of rifle-fire, and checked only to give place to rushes of infantry and the terrible work of bullet and bayonet at close quarters.

Briton and Boer fought their best, each fighting for life and country, and one side, at least, in payment of a long-deferred debt of vengeance and insult and the vindication of a too-long outraged national honour.

The peasant soldiery of the Transvaal fought as it had never fought before and would never fight again.

All the long hatred born of real and fancied wrongs blazed up into a fierce fury within them which knew neither fear nor common prudence.

As the two armies joined battle for the last time General Carrington, after giving his last orders, pointed with his sword to the frowning heights of Amajuba and said:

"Remember where you are boys, and whose graves there are up yonder!"

And his words had flown like a battle-signal through the ranks, echoed from lip to lip, and the men looked up and remembered the shameful story of that day sixteen years ago, and there was not a man of them all but swore in his heart that before the next sun rose that shame should be wiped away for ever from the British arms.

Foot by foot, and yard by yard the ring of British steel closed in round all that was left of the doomed army that had set out to conquer Africa for the Africander. The way by the bridge, across the spruit, was barred by the armoured train, from the guns of which death-dealing tempests of shot and shell burst forth whenever an attempt was made to force a retreat that way.

Along the banks of the spruit itself were the long, dusky lines and reddened bayonets of the Matabele Legion, and beyond, circling round between Volksrust and the open veld, were the dark, swiftly-moving forms of the Basuto horsemen, cutting off all hope of retreat to the north. West and south and east were the British regiments and the British batteries, and in the midst a vast, formless mob of men, which now could no longer be called an army.

Every now and then some of the encircling regiments would wheel back, the batteries would burst out in smoke and flame, and a whistling, screaming stream of shot and shell would tear its way through the crowded masses of men and horses, leaving long, wide gaps and lanes behind it strewn with struggling forms and others who would never struggle again.

Then, before the gaps and lanes could close, the British horse charged in with swinging sabre and swift-thrusting lance, breaking the great mass up like wedges of steel driven into the heart of some great prostrate tree, until at length it became disintegrated into smaller masses, each fighting for its own hand with the grim valour of a despair which knew that all was lost and yet refused to yield.

In the centre of the largest of these groups rose conspicuous the burly form of the old President, seated on a big, brown horse and surrounded by a devoted band of his comrades and kinsmen, determined, like him, to die in the death-hour of their nation and their hopes. Saving for the different conditions of warfare, it was the scene of Flodden Field over again, and, as the chivalry and devotion of Scotland had closed round their King four hundred years before, so now the peasant soldiers of the Transvaal closed round their stout old chief, and there was not a man of them who would dream of ceasing fire until his last cartridge had been shot away, or he had heard from the President's lips the words of surrender that he knew he would never speak.

CHAPTER XLV.

The Last Stand.

One of the most curious lessons that the history of nations teaches is the undeniable fact that the Fates delight in anti-climaxes. Over and over again, just as some human being has worked himself or herself up to within measurable distance of the apex of mundane glory, the Fates—who have been seriously suspected of treating the whole of human existence as a colossal practical joke—have introduced some ridiculous triviality into the seemingly great problem that was being worked out, and thereby reduced the conclusion to something very like absurdity.

Thus, for instance, just at the period when Alexander the Great was about to seat himself upon the throne of the world, he took those few goblets of wine too many which brought him face to face with the Conqueror who conquers all worlds.

Socrates marred the sublimity of an otherwise incomparable life by so far provoking Zantippe as to cause her to empty a bucket of slops over his venerable head.

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Mark Antony lost the world at Actium to follow the flutter of a flying petticoat.

William the Conqueror died on account of a clumsy joke.

Musa, the Moslem conqueror of Spain, might have taken Europe too if he had not dyed his beard red and flogged a brother of the faith for making rude remarks about it.

Charles V. might have fixed the policy of the civilised world for centuries if he had not suddenly become possessed of the idea that he was better fitted for the cloister than the throne.

Pizarro might have founded an empire which would have dwarfed that of his master if he had not sat a little too long over breakfast on that memorable day when the conspirators came into his room in the palace of Lima and found him lolling in doublet and hose instead of breastplate and greaves.

Napoleon must almost infallibly have won Waterloo, and with it Europe, but for a perfectly commonplace downfall of rain which kept his artillery stuck in the mud for the two hours during which it was most wanted, and so on through innumerable instances which might be quoted from Alexander's day down to the hour in which the heroism of President Kruger and his devoted kinsmen and comrades was turned into the nothingness of wholly unmerited pathos and absurdity by the inventive daring of a person whose name he had never even heard of.

For reasons which extended beyond the immediate results of the present battle, the commanders of the two wings of the British force had issued the most stringent orders that the portion of what had once been the army of the Transvaal which surrounded President Kruger, Commandant-General Joubert, and certain other personages whose importance in the past rendered them desirable acquisitions for the future should not be subjected to the battery fire which had been employed with such terrible effect upon the other portions.

In other words, it was, for reasons of State, most desirable that the President should either be induced by the logic of circumstances to surrender, or else be taken alive. Of his surrendering the events of the last hour or so proved that there was not the remotest chance. He was evidently determined to fight to the bitter end and die as a man, even as his people would die as a nation in the hour of his fate and theirs.

Of his capture alive there seemed just as little chance. That ring of rugged, devoted heroes which surrounded him could be broken by nothing save artillery or machine-gun-fire, and that would slay both him and them.

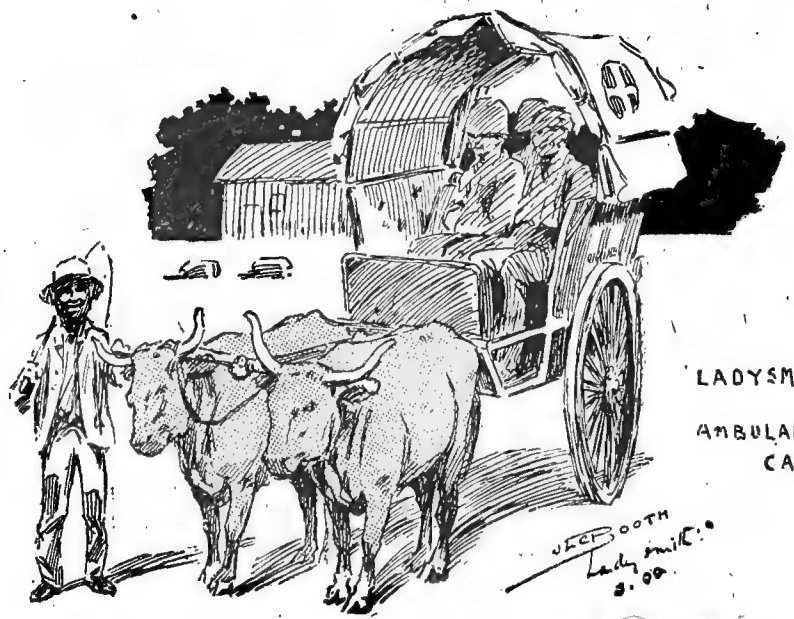
To break it by any other means seemed impossible. Time after time the British horse and foot charged up in turn with lance and sword and bayonet, only to be flung back by the storm of unerring rifle bullets which burst out from it as they came within pistol shot. Empty saddles, wounded and writhing horses, and decimated ranks were the only result, and not a few of the most death-dealing bullets had been sped by the rifle which the brave old man was loading and sighting and firing as quickly and as truly as the youngest and clearest-eyed of his protectors.

But there was a third element of chance which would soon come into play.

In less than an hour it would be dark and under cover of the dense gloom of the African summer night, it was possible that this devoted band of rude, unlettered heroes might fight their way to freedom with the chief for whom they were ready to risk all dangers in their midst.

If this could have been so, the Epic of Amajuba would have had a more fitting because a more heroic end. But the laughter-loving Fates and the inventive faculty of Sergeant Jackson P. Bethell, late of the Rhodesian Horse, and now of the Matabele Legion, were against it.

(To be continued.)



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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Vibart Affair," by G. Manville Fenn, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mrs. Eaton, 42 Hartington Road, West Derby, Liverpool. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT DOGS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 11th, Post-cards only, please.

Blameless.

DURING a recent railway disaster, an official was going round among the injured asking their names and addresses, when he came upon a ploughman.

He asked him his name and address in case of any compensation having to be made.

The ploughman replied:

"Man, what are ye makin' all the noise about? It wasn't me that knocked yer bloomin' train off the line."

M. E.

Sixpenn'rth for a Penny.

IN a recent case for compensation brought by a tobacconist against a railway company, the cross-examining counsel, who considered himself particularly smart, asked the plaintiff:

"But you don't really make £1,000 a year out of this little shop, do you?"

"Oh, yes, I do," replied the tobacconist emphatically.

"But how?"

"Well, you see," said the witness confidentially, "it's the situation of the shop. I get a lot of gents in late at night, who call for a sixpenny or shilling cigar, and I give 'em a Whitechapel penny 'un, and bless you! they don't know."

"Oh, nonsense!" said the counsel contemptuously, "you don't expect to make me believe you can do that?"

The witness waxed warm. Eyeing counsel with indignation, he retorted:

"Oh, can't I? Well, I've done it to you a good many times!"

And counsel collapsed.

J. M. W.

One Consolation.

MRS. MCGINTY had just lost her son, and the village parson had called on her for the purpose of comforting her in her distress. They talked of his many virtues, and in the sadness of the moment forgot his failings.

"Do not grieve, my good soul," said the parson, feelingly. "Remember that these great trials are always mercies in disguise."

The old woman pondered over these words for a few minutes, and then a light suddenly came into her eyes.

"Yes," she replied, "that's true. Now I come to think of it, Edward always was a big eater!"

J. L. M.

"With this Piece of Brick."

A LABOURER in a shipyard was one day given a two-foot rule to measure a piece of iron plate. Not being accustomed to the use of the rule, he returned it, after wasting a good deal of time.

"Well, Mike," asked his superior officer, "what is the size of the plate?"

"Well," replied Mike, with the smile which accompanies duty performed, "it's the length of your rule and two thumbs over, with this piece of brick and the breadth of my hand and arm, from here to there, bar a finger."

C. M.

Borrowing a Posture.

AN old woman whose husband was ill in bed sent for the doctor, who came and saw the old lady.

"I will send him some medicine," he said on leaving, "which must be taken in a recumbent posture."

After he had gone the old woman sat down, greatly puzzled.

"The recumbent posture—the recumbent posture!" she kept repeating. "I haven't got one."

At last she thought, "I will go and see if old Mrs. Smith has got one to lend me."

Accordingly she went and said to her neighbour:

"Have you a recumbent posture to lend me to put some medicine in?"

Mrs. Smith, who was equally as ignorant as her friend, replied:

"I had one, but to tell you the truth I have lost it."

R. T. F.

She Must Have Been Very Bad.

IN this day of slang and slipshod English it is quite refreshing to find one home in which our mother tongue is appreciated, and sins against its purity duly resented.

That there is at least one such was made evident in a quarrel which took place in a literary household between the two youngest inmates—a quarrel, like most childish differences, soon over, but fierce while it lasted.

When his wrath had reached its height, the small son of the house, quivering with anger, sought for language to denounce his sister, who had been the aggressor.

"You bad," he burst forth, stamping a stubby shoe. "You bad, you *bad*——" Words failed him.

Then with a flash of truly literary inspiration, he concluded: "You *bad grammar*, you!"

L. V.

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Followed the Cookery-book.

Mrs. Saunders, a recently-married lady, had no practical knowledge of cooking, but she bought a cookery-book, and made an earnest effort to overcome her deficiencies.

"I wish you would make me a lemon-pie for dinner," said Mr. Saunders one day. "My mother use to make such nice lemon-pies."

"Well, if you want any lemon-pies you can get your mother to make them for you. I'll not do it!" she said warmly.

"Why? I am surprised to hear you talk like that."

"I don't care if you are surprised. I'm not going to burn myself for anyone. I was reading the recipe in the cookery-book yesterday, and it winds up: 'Then sit on a hot fire and stir constantly.' I expect everyone would stir constantly while sitting on a hot fire, but I'm not going to make any experiments. Catch me sitting on a hot fire!" G. P.

Don't Be Two Literal.

Men of genius may do things which are forbidden to others.

A well-known artist, visiting a family whose wealth was newly acquired, was ostentatiously pressed by them to come and dine always.

"Always?" said the great man, smiling ironically.

"Yes, always."

He came the next evening, and was received with surprise; the next, and was entertained coldly.

He came every day for a week, until his host, very much annoyed, gave his servants orders to inform the painter that the family had gone out of town.

When he called the next evening he received the message.

"Ah!" said he, "is that so? Well, I will just run up and get my umbrella that I left last night."

He pr sented himself at the table just as the family were seating themselves for the meal, and they will probably never forget the look he bestowed on them as he turned away. A. W. H. S.

But There Were!

The gentleman living in the suburbs had a goat for the children's pleasure, and it was that kind of a goat which might well be called rambunctious, for it took possession of the place early, and showed little disposition to vacate.

One morning the goat walked out into the children's play-house, and as the gentleman was starting to the City he told the man about the place to drive it out and shut it up in the stables. The man promised, and the master proceeded to his office. At noon the man came to the office on an errand.

"By the way, John," said the master, "did you put that goat in the stables as I told you?"

John began to hedge.

"I was busy, sir, and——"

"Busy be hanged," interrupted the master. "I told you to put it in the stable, and that's what I wanted you to do."

"Yes, sir," parleyed John, "but——"

"There's no buts about it. I——"

"Oh, but there is, sir," interrupted John this time. "If you don't believe me, sir, you just tackle the goat yourself, sir, and you'll see how many 'butts' there are." E. M. T.

No Use for the "Plate."

A starved and ragged lad wandered for hours about the London docks in search of work. He had not tasted food since the morning.

A vessel came into dock late in the day, and the cook, seeing the boy, invited him to warm himself and dry his rags at the galley fire.

He then gave the boy a large piece of pork upon a ship's biscuit, which is as hard as a board, and the famished lad ran off to tell his mother (who sold matches close by) of his good luck.

In a short time he returned with the biscuit wrapped in paper and said:

"Mother thanks you, sir, for the pork, and is much obliged to you for the loan of the plate."

W. L.

A Token of Love.

"I witnessed a most remarkable sight to-day," said Mr. Brown, bursting into the room where his better half sat perusing the papers. "In fact," he continued, "I might say never in the course of my experience have I seen a policeman in such a peculiar predicament."

"A policeman!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "Dear me! Were some roughs ill-treating him?"

"Oh, no! I was just coming along the street, when I saw a policeman on th s very beat with his arm embracing a lamp-post. In fact, I would not be absolutely certain that he was not speaking to it at the same time."

"What extraordinary conduct for a guardian of the law!" interjected Mrs. B. "Was the man intoxicated at all?"

Before the lord and master had time to reply, the indignant voice of the housemaid was heard through the half-opened door:

"'Toxicated! Lor', ma'am, no! That's only a way he's got when he's thinking of me, ma'am!"

R. J. M.

A New Industry.

"Where can I get a lot of barbed wire cheap," asked Farmer Furrow of his friend, Doogood.

"Well, they're giving it away in Russia," said old Doogood.

"What for?" gasped the astonished farmer dropping his spade.

"For nothing, of course. You see, after the telegraph wires over there have been used a little while, the Russian language twists them all out of shape and the peasants use them for fences."

Farmer Furrow said nothing, but puffed hard at his pipe and looked at the sky.

H. A. E.

RESULT OF

Top Line Competition.

The prize of One Guinea offered in connection with this Competition has been won by Mr. DAVID BYERS, 24 Ferber Street, Crewe.

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The Tenant at Woodcotes.

"It's all right, Dick, so don't you worry; worry s wearing, take my tip."

"My word!" said the other, "but I tell you it's getting on my nerves."

The place was the down platform at Swatton Junction. The first speaker had all the appearance of a typical English gentleman. His luggage lay heaped upon the platform, Gladstone bag, travelling trunk, gun-case and so forth, the usual impedimenta of the man who has nothing to do in life but enjoy himself.

The second man was dressed in the company's uniform. He was in fact the guard of the local train which runs between Swatton Junction and Titherton.

The guard was about to make some further remark to his companion, when a porter came towards them.

He was a loutish looking fellow, a recruit probably from one of the surrounding villages. It struck one that cleaning lamps, washing carriage windows and opening and shutting doors were about as much as he was equal to.

However, the conversation underwent an astonishing change as he came within earshot.

Mr. James J. Oram (his name was lettered across his travelling bag for all the world to see) was saying, condescendingly:

"Yes, the gun-case, the bag and the rug to go in the carriage, my man; the other traps, in the van—and be very careful of them—do you hear?"

"Very good, sir," said the guard, touching his hat, and he crossed to the platform where the "local" stood waiting for passengers from the main line train, already overdue.

'Enery, the porter in question, disappeared into the lamp room, in whose black depths he appeared to spend the greater part of his time.

The train arrived, and 'Enery shut the carriage doors after the passengers who alighted. Then he, too, crossed over to the other platform. The guard was standing at the window of the first class carriage in which Mr. James J. Oram was seated.

"Here's Chawbacon again," said that gentleman. As 'Enery came up the platform the guard was apparently in the act of receiving a gratuity from Mr. Oram.

"And—here my man," said that gentleman as 'Enery was passing, "there's something for you to drink my health with."

'Enery took the something and touched his forelock sheepis ly. He chuckled to himself as he shambled down the platform. No doubt he was thinking of the glass of four-ale, which he would presently be quaffing when his day's work was over.

A smart dog-cart was in attendance at Titherton to take Mr. Oram to his house. It was called Woodcotes. It was not very large, but large enough for a single man. There were only two servants, a housekeeper and a parlour-maid, both of whom he had brought with him from town. The odd man who acted as coachman and gardener did not live in the house.

It was a strange gathering in Mr. Oram's drawing room that evening. The master of the house was seated in an easy chair by the fire, his housekeeper sat facing him, the parlour-maid, divested of both cap and apron, was at the piano. She was singing and her auditors seemed not only reconciled to this somewhat unconventional proceeding, but appeared to be enjoying it.

Presently the door opened. There was little difficulty in recognising the newcomer, though he no longer wore a guard's uniform. He nodded and sat down. When the *soi-disant* parlour-maid had finished her song he crossed over to her and they were soon deeply engaged in conversation.

Presently the master of the house drew him on one side.

"Look here, old chap," he said, "you come here a great deal too often."

"Oh, come, Harry," said the other, "isn't a fellow to sometimes see the girl he's engaged to?"

His host repressed a gesture of impatience.

It was a great piece of good fortune for Mr. James J. Oram when he ran across Dick Rivers. It should be understood that Oram and the celebrated Henry Marsh, thief, forger and general expert in crime, were one and the same person. He had held up banks in Australia, and the mail in the Western States. He had planted bogus securities in Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Amsterdam.

Rivers, though he had not had Marsh's cosmopolitan experience, was himself an old hand. He had, however, secured a post on the line—not, as might be imagined, altogether by straightforward means—and had been leading an honest life for some time until he met Marsh.

Rivers was not won over so easily as expected. It was not until he had visited Mr. Oram several times that he finally agreed to engage in the undertaking. The cause

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was not far to seek. He had fallen in love with Marsh's pretty sister-in-law. The housekeeper was Marsh's wife, the smart parlour-maid her sister.

There was a third person in the plot, but there is no need to say much about him. He was a clerk in Messrs. Bullivant's bank at Valparaiso. For the sum of five hundred pounds he had agreed to cable information as to the shipment of certain cases of gold ingots to Liverpool, to be sent on from there to London.

There were plans to be discussed in the drawing-room that night for the vessel was due in a few days at latest. It was past midnight when Rivers rose to go.

He did not notice, as he shut the garden gate behind him, a figure which stole out from among the evergreens after he had passed. Someone was evidently keeping an eye on Mr. Oram and his friends. He might well have been listening, for the drawing-room window was open at the top. An active man by climbing up the waterspout, which ran up the side of the house, might have heard and seen all that had gone on within.

The next day Mr. James J. Oram took train to Liverpool and waited. The vessel arrived two days later. Having seen it in, he called a cab, drove to the post-office and despatched a wire to Titherton. From the post-office he drove to the station. He booked by the train which carried the ingots. There was only one other passenger in the compartment and he found Mr. Oram a most agreeable companion.

The train was nearing Swatton Junction, when the fireman called his mate's attention to the fact that a plate-layer was signalling them to stop. The driver put on the brake at once. The fireman got down on to the line and questioned the plate-layer. He seemed a surly sort of fellow.

"Line blocked below the signal box—that's all I know," he said. "Maybe it's a goods wagon got loose, maybe not."

And as though it were no business of his to answer idle questions he walked down the line away from the engine.

* * * * *

Mr. James J. Oram rose from his seat, looking at his watch as he did so.

"Dear me," he said, "how very annoying. And I have some friends dining with me to-night. We can't be more than a few minutes from the Junction. I think I will get out and walk."

With many objurgations upon the company for the delay, he opened the door, bade his companion good-night and jumped down upon the track.

But instead of making his way towards the station Mr. Oram went in the opposite direction. He dived just in time between the couplings of some car iages, as he caught sight of the guard's head projecting from the door of his van.

At last he reached the guard's van. He climbed on the footboard and peered through the window; yes, the guard was gone. He had evidently gone up the train to see what was wrong, exactly as they had thought he would.

Rivers had done the job splendidly, too, so far. He had brought the train to a standstill just at the point they had fixed upon. Here the line curved. The guard's van was at the end of the curve and could not be seen from the engine. The pretended platelayer came up at this moment and together they entered the van.

The cases containing the ingots stood ready to hand. The embankment sloped gently down to a lane which ran alongside. The cases were removed from the van and slid down the slope impelled by their own weight. In the lane stood Mr. Oram's dog-cart.

Now Mr. Oram had discharged his coachman the day before. His new coachman, otherwise Dick Rivers, having brought the dog-cart to the scene of operations had promptly transformed himself, with the aid of a suit of fustian and a belcher handkerchief into an excellent imitation of a platelayer.

When the cases had been transferred to the trap it was the work of a few minutes for him to don his coachman's livery again. The suit of fustian was put under the seat of the dog-cart.

Neither of them had thought of seeing whether the plate-layer's hut which stood on the side of the line was occupied, nor did they notice as they drove away that someone came out of it and walked towards the station.

By this time the fireman had gone forward to Swatton. Messages had flashed backwards and forwards between station and station. No, there was no block upon the line anywhere, and as for the platelayer, the station-master knew nothing of him. The fireman went grumbling back to his engine, the train proceeded on its way.

'Enery, to the station-master's annoyance was nowhere to be found, or it would have been interesting to see the effect the story of the robbery would have produced upon his stolid countenance.

The local train was about to start—Rivers the guard was not on duty that night—as a dapper little man booked to Titherton. He had black eyes which twinkled with intelligence. He laughed softly to himself during the journey.

On his arrival he drove to Titherton police station. In a quarter of an hour he was seated beside the driver on the box-seat of a waggonette. Four police officers rode inside. They drew up within a few hundred yards of Mr. Oram's residence. The little man leading the way, up to the front door they marched. When the parlourmaid saw who the visitors were she tried to close the door upon them. But it was too late.

They locked the women up for safety in one of the rooms. Then they sat down and waited. They heard the wheels of Mr. Oram's trap as he drove up to the house. They heard them stabling the horse, the key clicked in the latch and they pounced upon them as they entered.

"Good evening, Marsh," said the little man.

Mr. Marsh was too much of a philosopher to show any surprise.

"Oh, it's you is it?" said he, "well, you've treed me this time. How on earth did you manage it?"

"Well," said the detective with a grin, "you were very generous to me the other night, so I don't mind telling you. One good turn deserves another. You remember our young friend 'Enery?—now you're not going to make a fuss."

Marsh looked him up and down.

"Not I, my boy," he said, "I admit you've been one too many for us."

Mr. Marsh's visit to these shores had not passed unnoticed by the Scotland Yard authorities. Detective Inspector Linklater—otherwise our friend 'Enery—was deputed to keep an eye on him. It was he who had been lurking in the shrubbery at Woodcotes. He had overheard the plot and had secreted himself in the platelayer's cabin. To have attempted to arrest them single-handed would have meant the escape of one or both of them. So he bided his time.

'Enery's mysterious disappearance was a nine days' wonder at the Junction. Then they forgot him.

W. L. Lillingston.

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THORLINDA.

THE morning wind blew freshly up the fiord along the hillside, fluttering the red kirtles of two chieftains who stood there, and ruffling the white swans' wings that decked their helmets.

As the cloaks of the warriors streamed backward, the April sunlight sparkled gaily among the rings of their mail coats and flashed upon the silver pommels of their swords, while, whenever they turned or moved, the broad blade of the war-axe each carried on his shoulder shot back the arrows of the sun.

The two were brothers—Thorolf and Gudmund—both tall men and good to look upon, but Thorolf, the elder, was ruddy, and broad, and fair, while Gudmund was of slender build. His eyes, too, were dark. His neck and forehead were shaded beneath his helmet by waves of blue black hair.

On the beach before them, the brown armed seamen had pushed their ship out into deep water.

Her prow only still muzzled in the sand and held her steady against the shoreward wind and the lap of the harbour waves.

Her crew had stowed the last barrels of beef and casks of mead for the voyage, and now one by one they clambered in over the bow, and seating themselves at the thwarts, each hung his leather-covered shield outside the gunwale.

Then they tossed the long ashen oars blade upward and dropped them between the tholepins, the flat blades slapping the water as they fell.

After fastening the leather thongs that held the oars in place against the wash of a head sea the men sat silent, fingering their oar butts, waiting for the chiefs to come aboard.

Folk had gathered on the hill to watch the vessel sail. In front of the little group stood a viking's daughter, very fair and taller by a head than the wives of the fishermen and villagers.

She was Thorlinda, cousin to Thorolf and Gudmund, and she was the beloved of Thorolf. Wonderfully beautiful she looked as the wind blew back the linen drapery across her breast and limbs and rippled the wreaths of red gold hair about the fullness of her throat.

Thorolf stood near her, talking little, but with his eyes upon her face, smiling ever at the words she spoke, though the smile was a sad one and passed as quickly as it came.

Gudmund spoke no word nor smiled, but stood as one who wishes to be gone, his dark eyes gazing beyond the fiord mouth to where a glimpse of the ocean glimmered grayly through the fast clearing haze. The helmsman called that all was ready.

Thorolf turned and took Thorlinda in his arms. Gudmund still gazed seaward, and none saw that just when the lovers' lips met his right hand tightened about the axe hilt until his fingers grew white and bloodless, while a wildness gleamed from his helmet shaded eyes. Yet when Thorolf put aside the maiden's arms and leaped with a rattle of war-gear to the beach, Gudmund turned to her a quiet face, met her smile a moment, looked down, and silently followed his brother.

As the chieftains strode to the stern the rowers backed water with a swirl of foam and a shout. Then the helmsman threw his weight against the steering oar, the bow swung round, the carved dragon head at the bows seemed to stretch its neck seaward, snuffing for the broad sweep of the ocean, and to the measured roll and chant of an oar song the ship glided down the fiord.

Yet as she nodded lightly to the harbour chop Gudmund staggered where he stood and pressed his hands to his face. Then he went forward, ran out an oar and swung steadily with the beat of the rowers.

Thorolf stood thoughtful, gazing above the shimmer of the wake to where a figure fluttered white upon the hillside, and something of triumph, almost a smile, was in his look, for her kiss still lay hot between his lips.

Presently he turned and looked forward and saw where his brother's mail coat gleamed among the blue jerkins of the seamen. Yet his face he did not see, for Gudmund's dark hair was blown about his cheeks and forehead as he swung to and fro. Thorolf watched the

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sweep of his brother's oar blade as it lashed through the water.

"Ah, Gudmund," said he, "you part lightly, and your heart goes out before you to new lands. For me, I feel as though my heart were left behind with Thorlinda, yet my bosom is no lighter for its loss."

"Aye," said the helmsman as he watched the white water swirl after, "he pulls a stronger oar than many, and it is but a little while that we thought him a stripling. Youth and a light heart carry the ship against a head gale when age and sorrow drive under torn canvas."

Thorolf sighed, and turned again to look at the green hillside, the white figure and the dark fir trees beyond, but some of the rowers heard through the rumble of their oars the sob that burst its way between Gudmund's lips.

To those watching from shore the ship was lessening fast, and the oarsmen's song faded into the lapping of water along the beach.

Now she had passed the headland, and they saw her rise and fall with the long heave of the open sea. Now the wet oars flashed in the sun as the rowers tossed them inboard, and running forward loosed the great square sail that bellied from the yard.

Twice the canvas flapped, then, sheeted home, it stood taut and full, while the good ship, heeling beneath it, plowed steadily southward.

The haze had cleared before the fresh sea wind, and the ocean lay blue and sparkling in the sunlight. Thorlinda stood alone, her grave eyes watching the gleam of the sail until it sank from sight, and the empty, peaceful ocean gave no sign of the storm which was to drive that keel far into unknown waters.

* * * * *

Noon lay heavy over a southern land—a land shady with groves of palm and fruit trees, scented with thick odours, washed about its shores by a cloudless sea.

Upon a dazzling stretch of sand Gudmund sat silent, looking out across the ocean—an ocean such as he had never known in his northern home, for its waters were of a deep and glowing purple, like the light upon mountain peaks at sunset, and in place of the thunder crash of a Norwegian surf low ripples curled murmurously along the shore.

Gudmund was no longer a youth. His face was older and thinner than on that day when they had left the fiord.

He sat now with his chin upon his hand slowly tracing with the tip of his scabbard a woman's face upon the sand.

Throughout his boyhood he had looked up to his brother as braver and stronger than himself, as always doing the deeds he merely longed to do. Yet now, sunk in the languor of this new land, Thorolf had still delayed sailing, and the vikings' ship lay on the beach like a stranded sea monster, her planks gaping open in the fierce sun.

To Gudmund, gazing seaward with empty eyes, there arose a dream of his own northland. The fiord glimmered grey between black walls of rock; the snowy land lay white and silent in the winter twilight, darkened with long violet shadows upon the eastward hills. Here and there a breath of smoke rose skyward from some half-buried grange.

Again he saw their father's hall—the hearth with great logs roaring in red flame, the long tables where house carles laughed and clattered the mead horns, and high up on the dais the ruddy face and beard of the old viking crowning the feast, Thorlinda at his side.

While he mused his brother came from among the shades of the thicket seeking him and threw an arm in kindly way about his shoulders.

"Why, Gudmund, were the dark girls shy, or are you unkind to them?" he asked.

"I dreamed of home," said the younger dully. "How soon do we sail?"

Thorolf pushed him roughly away. "That's again! You are an ungrateful fool who would wander from a good land to a worse. Yet, take the men and go. I shall stay."

"How shall I greet the home folk from you, an honourless man, and your troth to Thorlinda?"

Thorolf scowled, and his hand flew to his swordless side. Nothing rouses the wild beast so quickly in the mind of a weak man as when another steps in to help his better angel in the losing fight.

Anger flamed hot in Thorolf's face as he sprang forward, but Gudmund's sword flashed bare, and for the first time the elder man gave back and shrank from leaping with clenched hands against a levelled blade. His glance, which had ever been steady and as keen as steel when swords were drawn, changed to a heavy look, and he lowered his eyes before the scorn of his brother's gaze. Then as the brute within him rose in final triumph over his better self he turned away with a laugh.

"Go to the cold northern land. Go yourself and shiver between Thorlinda's arms," he cried out and strode back into the musky shade.

* * * * *

Once again the long dragon ship lay ready to sail.

Of her crew some had been lost at sea, some had died, and some had wandered away with savage maidens far into the inland valleys. Yet still a remnant was eager to follow Gudmund homeward.

They were rich with the gold of that land. They could buy fields and farms in their own country and pass their old age in peace.

For five days they had been working hard—Gudmund hardest of all—caulking the seams of the old warship, filling the water casks and victualling her with sun-dried fish and fruit and such meat as they could get.

Thorolf, with his dark wife, had kept apart.

Once the grey helmsman had talked with Gudmund, proposing that they should bind his brother in sleep and carry him aboard, since it was a shame that a hero should thus be lost, and if they left him the black people would surely kill him when alone among them.

Gudmund struggled with the thought. A wild and anxious hope had filled his mind. Against this his duty to Thorolf rose clear and strong. Yet after all why should he drag his brother from his happiness? Surely he could not love Thorlinda, nor would she love him if she knew. And he lifted his head and answered, "My brother has chosen his own way."

Now all things about the ship were ready for sailing. The crew pushed her out through the low wash of the sea, and clamberi g over the sides settled themselves at their thwarts. Even as they did so Thorolf came through the thicket and walked slowly down the beach. The men lay on their oars watching him. Seeing that they paused, he, too, stood still, and with his heel crushed a delicate seashell into the sand.

"Pull, men!" said Gudmund and covered his eyes with his hand.

The oars rumbled in the rowlocks, but with the first stroke Thorolf threw his arms above his head, strode forward and shouted:

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"Stop!"

As he ran down the beach a dark-skinned girl burst wildly from the thicket, shrieked and plunged back into the shade, then leaped forth again, grasping a bow, with a brightly feathered arrow drawn to the head. The seamen stood upright and shouted. Gudmund waved his arms, and Thorolf paused and turned, only to see his death, for at that moment the arrow whistled and sank deep into his side.

As he fell, Gudmund leaped into the water and a moment after knelt beside him. The dying man frowned fixedly at him.

Thorolf's right hand had gripped the arrow just above the wound and broken it short.

The blood dripped steadily between his fingers, blackening the white sand. Thus the two gazed at each other, nor could all the strength of natural grief keep back from Gudmund's eyes a sparkle of hope and joy. Thorolf's mouth twitched. His shuddering breath broke into a great sob that sent a blood gush from the wound.

"You have Thorlinda. I hate you!" he moaned, then turned upon his face, gasped once and never stirred again.

* * * * *

A black autumn afternoon gloomed above the fiord. The ocean shivered, gray and white, beneath a cold, wet wind that drove the spray far inland and tore the yellow leaves from bush and tree.

Folk had gathered on the hillside, for from the headland the stormbound fishermen had sighted a tall dragon ship driving in before the gale, and there were many in the neighbourhood whose kinsmen had sailed in such a ship with the two brothers more than four years ago.

Now the watchers could see her plainly, rolling and weltering in the angry seaway, the spray breaking in sheets above her. Storm-battered she looked, and her crew were few, yet they raised a shout as she lurched past the headland and staggered up the fiord.

And now they let the sail go with a run. Now with a rush and surge of water about her prow the ship took ground at the beach, and the seamen leaped over her bows, waist deep, to be kissed and thronged about by old sweethearts and friends.

Gudmund stood still at the tiller, haggard and bearded, girt with a rough fur cloak, his hair and forehead grey with the brine which had dried upon them. He staggered as he walked forward, and dropped heavily to the beach, his eyes fixed upon Thorlinda.

Far out at the fiord mouth he had seen her tall white figure, and his gaze had never left it. Through all the voyage the thought of her had been before him, dimming the memory of his brother.

Had he acted for the best or had he been false to both? He hardly knew. If Thorolf had been true to her, would he still, as of old, have fought down the passionate love in his own heart? What did it matter now if once he held her in his arms?

He had rowed with the strength of any two, and when his men were spent with labour and ceaseless bailing it was he who held the tiller when they slept. It was he who had kept the watch at night, with steady eyes upon the northern stars.

He went towards her, slow and weak, asking silently for a glance, a word, but she looked beyond him to the empty ship and to the seamen.

At length she turned to him and gave her hand, asking quietly, though the words shook:

"Was it in battle he died, or did Aegir, the Wave god, take him?"

Then he began, looking downward, and told her as best he could, but he did not know what words he said, for he could not hear the sound of his own voice, and he swayed slightly where he stood. Yet, still speaking, he noticed as in a dream how sear and yellow the grass had grown and how closely the sheep had cropped it. A short cry broke from his dream. He looked up and stood rigid, for under her red gold hair her blue eyes blazed, and in their angry look he saw again his brother's dying face.

Then she spoke. From her full breast and throat the words came deep and low:

"Cousin," she said, "not without fame you have come home, and you shall indeed live long in the memory of men, for you are the first of the house of Egil to have earned the name of coward and traitor."

Dreaming still, he turned and walked towards the sea. The long sigh of the waves, the hurry of the autumn wind, heavy with rain and mist, all blended with his dream. For a moment the storm-wrack cleared to westward, and a yellow glare came over the sky as the setting sun shone on the black rocks and green water and restless ridges of foam. Gudmund stood while the last glow lay warm upon his eyes and matted hair.

Then as the clouds rolled up again he sank down, unclasped the sword belt and threw open his cloak of fur, the rain beating against his breast and forehead. His head dropped lower, and with the point of his scabbard he slowly traced a woman's face upon the sands, while still the raindrops blurred the lines. Darkness came over the fiord; the early evening gloomed and deepened into night.

Next morning when some fishers passed that way, they paused and marvelled greatly that so strong a man should lie there dead with never a wound in his body.

N. Y. T.

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BECAUSE the usual treatments only confine themselves to combating single symptoms instead of attacking the root of the disease.

BE SURE THERE IS ONE

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Sufferers will receive, post free,

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Particulars of the FAMOUS WEIDHAAS HOME TREATMENT when applying to PAUL WEIDHAAS, Pulmonary Institute, 16 T.A. Buckingham Road, Brighton.

I have tried the treatment on myself, after having been given up as incurable, and cured myself, and have since practised it for over 19 years in many thousands of special Cases. Many having suffered for over 40 years have been cured by my treatment (in some instances even at the age of 70 or 80 years), after having been

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No interference with daily occupation. Send description of complaint, and mention if you suffer from COLD FEET. Read the following testimonial, one of scores received:

SEVERE CASE OF CHRONIC BRONCHITIS CURED

Your cure has done wonders for me; I feel quite a new man. I do not have any of those drowsy and languid feelings, no bad taste in the mornings, do not spit any phlegm, do not have any thumping of the heart as I used to, can enjoy my food, do not have any pain after eating. No man can be more thankful than I am to think I am relieved of that dreadful complaint, and I owe everything to your Cure. My friends tell me I should have been a dead man before now if something had not been done for me. Please accept my thanks.

Hurst, (Address on application.) OWEN DEACON.

Mr. WEIDHAAS is prepared to pay

£1,000

to any Charitable Institution if the above is not a genuine extract from the patient's own letter. The original may be seen at his Institute by any bona-fide inquirers.

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For SEPTEMBER, 1900.

15,409 Handsome PRIZES, value £6,641 10s.

LIST OF PRIZES:

1	Cash Prize of £50	£50	0
2	Cash Prizes, £40 each	80	0
5	Pianos, £40 each	200	0
3	Cash Prizes, £30 each	90	0
3	Cash Prizes, £25 each	75	0
5	American Organs, £20 each	100	0
20	Ladies' Bicycles (free wheel), £7 17s. each	357	0
20	Gents' Bicycles (free wheel), £7 17s. each	357	0
5	Cash Prizes, £10 each	50	0
10	Cash Prizes, £7 10s. each	75	0
10	Cash Prizes, £5 each	50	0
20	Cash Prizes of 50s. each	50	0
50	Gents' Rolled Gold Waltham Levers, 50s. each	125	0
300	Ladies' Sterling Silver Watches, 30s. each	450	0
200	Cash Prizes of £1 each	200	0
250	Electro-plated Teapots, 15s. each	187	10
500	Gents' Umbrellas, 15s. each	375	0
500	Ladies' Umbrellas, 15s. each	375	0
100	Pairs of Witney Blankets, 15s. pair	75	0
500	Cash Prizes, 10s. each	£250	0
500	Handsome Meat Carvers, with Steel in Case 10s. per set	250	0
500	Gents' Gun-metal Watches, 10s. each	250	0
500	Ladies' Umbrellas, 7/6 each	187	10
1,000	Ladies' Dress Lengths (Navy Blue Serge, 6 yds., double width) 7/6 each	375	0
400	White Linen Table Cloths, 70in. square, 6s. each	120	0
500	Cash Prizes of 5s each	125	0
500	Brushes and Combs in handsome cases, 4/6 each	112	10
2,000	Cash Prizes, 4s. each	400	0
2,000	Ladies' Leather Handbags, 4s. each	400	0
1,000	Handsome Pictures "Charge of the Light Brigade," 4/- each	200	0
2,000	Handsome Work-boxes, 3s. each	300	0
2,000	½-doz. Fine Linen Cambric Handkerchiefs, 2/6 each	250	0
15,409		£6,641	10

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

Every tablet of Watson's Matchless Cleanser is enclosed in a Wrapper, with signature up the centre of same. Save the WHOLE Wrapper (tops of Wrappers will be disqualified), and send, postage or carriage paid, to Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds, not later than SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1900. Each package will be counted as one lot; separate entries must be sent under separate covers. If any parcel arrives, postage or carriage not being fully paid, such parcel will be refused. Be careful to see that the full postage is paid. Each parcel sent in must contain the full name and address of sender, and number of Wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write lecibly "Prize Competition." The prizes will be awarded in the above order to the senders of the highest numbers of Wrappers. A list, giving result of the Competition, will be enclosed with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. All prizes will be despatched about October 25th.

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Is pleasant to use, its washing qualities are well-known. Dirt flies before it, and the washing is done quickly and easily. It has the largest sale of 1-lb. tablets in the world. Sold by all Grocers, Oilmen, &c., throughout the United Kingdom.

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The Brain Gymnasium

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, June 18th, 1900.

No. 136.

Transform BLACK into WHITE in eight moves, changing one letter at a time, each move to make a dictionary word.

No. 137.

From the letters of the words "Almost a toad," form the name of a dainty dish.

No. 138.

The following signifies a well-known proverb. What is it?

WE IS DO

No. 139.

Form a square word with words signifying:

"TO SQUANDER," "A PLAYER," "A MINERAL CONCRETION," "A PICK-ME-UP," "UPRIGHT."

No. 140.

One-third of grape, plus one-fourth of wave, plus two-fifths of hardy, plus one-fourth of rage, plus one-fourth of elephant, plus one-fifth of fight, plus one-third of undone.

The sum will give the name of a well-known poem.

No. 141.

Supply the blanks in the following sentences with words all spelt with the same letters:

If you want to find the cottage of your _____ father, you must go through that _____. You will find the _____ ground _____ than it is here.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 112 to 117.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. W. Tapley, of 10 Gregory Street, Loughborough, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following have been awarded a copy of "The Raid of the Detrimental," by the Earl of Desart:

Richard Unwin, 10 Windermere Street, Liverpool.
H. G. Driffield, 2 Rosebank Grove, Leeds.
Miss Edith Bassnett, 1 Thomas Street, Butts, Coventry.
Miss A. F. Symmonds, Winton House, Denham, Uxbridge.
Sydney Curzons, 2 Lockton Street, North Kensington, W.
F. Smith, 77 Elm Grove, Brighton.
Mrs. Bourne, 72 Meadow Road, South Lambeth, S.W.
A. Cottrell, 120A Bristol Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.
A. E. Dayley, 61 William Edward Street, Birmingham.
James M. Wood, Heath Vale, Hatherley Road, Sidcup.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 118 to 123.

No. 118. When one is taken away. XIX., XX.

No. 119.

	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	-	45.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	-	45.
	8	6	4	1	9	7	5	3	2	-	45

No. 120. Fifty-nine seconds.

No. 121.

R E S T
E V E R
S E R E
T R E E

No. 122. 58.

No. 123. Shire, Rogue, Emotion, Rage, Enwheel, Height, Tree.

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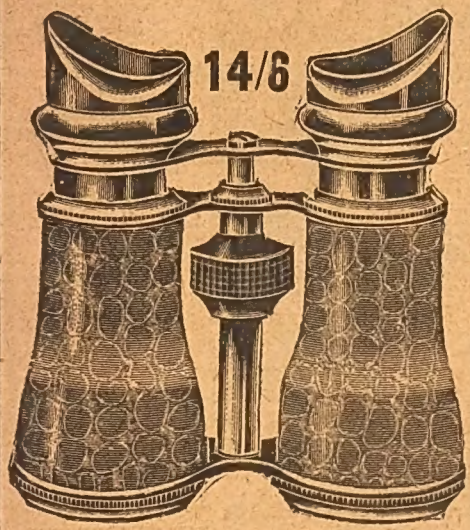

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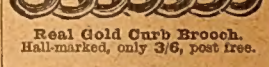

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